

JOHN BARING'S HOUSE



ELSIE SINGMASTER

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John Baring's House



ELIZABETH AND HERBERT

John Baring's House

By

Elsie Singmaster



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TO
JAMES ARTHUR SINGMASTER, JUNIOR

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JOHN BARING'S HOUSE

Chapter I

A NEW HOME

SITTING on the doorstep, Elizabeth Scott leaned her head against the stone wall of the old house. The June twilight was closing in and a hard day's work was done. Three meals had been prepared and half of the large garden had been hoed and weeded. Feeling that their gardening knowledge was limited, Elizabeth and her brother made up by an excess of cultivation.

A tall, slender boy came round the corner of the house and called "Elizabeth!" There was a dependent quality in his voice; one would have guessed that he was a good deal younger and a good deal less enterprising than the sister whom he addressed.

"Yes, Herbert!" Elizabeth looked up smil-

ingly. Her voice was soft like his, but the words were briskly and firmly spoken. Briskness and firmness were two of Elizabeth's most noticeable qualities. Those who opposed her called her firmness stubbornness.

There was another quality expressed in her voice — an intense affection for the brother whom she addressed.

“Are n't you going to bed, Elizabeth?”

“Not yet. Come and sit down.”

Herbert dropped to the doorstep beside his sister. His motions still showed the effect of a long illness from which he had not entirely recovered.

“Are you very tired, Herbert?”

“Not very.”

For a long time both were quiet. The old house seemed gradually to sink into the woodland which rose behind it against the wall of the higher mountains, the shadows of night crept over the miles of fields and orchards which dropped to the distant plain, the garden be-

tween the house and the road was blotted out, and the old oak trees on the other side came closer and closer. In the woods whip-poor-wills called, and once an owl flapped low above the doorstep. At that Herbert started and Elizabeth spoke reassuringly.

"Nothing but an owl, dear! He looked like a great moth, did n't he? Herbert, when we can, we must restore the old driveway. It used to come in from the road in a beautiful curve to the door. Then the garden can be moved, and I believe if we'd cut away that clump of poor trees we could sit here on our own doorstep and see Gettysburg. Think of it, Herbert!"

"Yes," said Herbert. His voice expressed pleasure, but a qualified pleasure.

"I can't make it seem *real*," said Elizabeth.

"If we can only succeed!"

"Of course we shall succeed!" Any one listening to Elizabeth would have said "Of course!"

"In the first place, we have this house, blessed,

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substantial old thing that it is, only occasionally occupied during forty years and yet habitable after a little mending of the roof. John Baring's character can be seen in the way he built his house. I'm more proud of him every day. Then we have the acres and acres of woodland behind us, and our garden — think of the produce we have to sell to-morrow! And soon we shall have our orchard, — *our* orchard, Herbert. They say that men within a few miles have sold a single crop for ten thousand dollars. It will mean work and saving and then comfort for all our lives. Why, we are the most fortunate people in the world!"

Herbert looked back over his shoulder into the dark hall. At the other end a door opened against the black wall of the woodland.

"Does n't it make you nervous to think of those men prowling round with their guns and dogs?"

"Not at all. They'll have to be warned away. I suppose they're so used to roaming about that

they think the place is theirs. I'm not so much afraid of them as I am of their big dogs running over the garden."

"What is that noise, Elizabeth?"

Elizabeth listened intently. Herbert often heard alarming noises. There was a soft rustle of leaves near at hand.

"A deer, I guess," she answered cheerfully, "or some other wild thing — nothing to hurt us, I'm sure. I cannot see why our people ever went away from here. Grandfather Baring was a man of standing — why, this must have been the finest place for miles around! Wait till we have a new portico and a little paint on the woodwork and some shrubbery! I should think mother would have been continually homesick."

"Did she ever say she was?"

"No. When I asked her she used to tell me what she remembered hearing people say about the battle. She was not a talkative person. But all these years the taxes have been paid and there was n't even always a renter."

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"Do you think she believed we should ever come back? Do you —" Herbert interrupted himself. "There is some one looking at us now!"

"Where?"

"There's a man at the edge of the woods with a big dog and a gun!"

Elizabeth turned her head. The moon had risen and its rays shone on a long object of bright steel. This object was not pointed in the direction of the two on the doorstep; it slanted backward from the shoulder which supported it, but it was none the less menacing.

Elizabeth sprang up, a short, somewhat stocky, swiftly moving figure.

"Well, neighbor!" she said loudly. "How are you this evening?"

The man drew back into the shadows, but he was not to be allowed to slink away. Elizabeth went closer to him.

"Are n't you a neighbor?" she persisted.

"Not close," was the sullen answer.

“Have you lived about here a long time?”

“’Bout’s long as I’ve lived anywhere.” It was impossible to tell whether this was a humorous way of saying that he had lived here always, or whether it was meant to indicate that he was a wanderer.

“We are going to stay here,” went on Elizabeth. “After a while when our orchard is set out, we shall need a good deal of help. Could you give us a hand sometimes?”

“No.”

“Do you know any one who could?”

“No.”

“We really belong here,” explained Elizabeth pleasantly.

The stranger seemed startled.

“What do you mean by that?”

“This was our grandfather’s place. We were born in the West, but our people are gone, and so we have come back. We’re going to raise apples. The fields in front of the house are to be turned into an orchard.”

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It seemed that the stranger could take in but one thought at a time.

"Your gran'paw lived here?"

"Yes."

"What mought 'a' been his name?"

"John Baring was his name. Did you ever hear of him?"

"I heard of him." The answer, begun near at hand, receded into the shadows, as man and dog disappeared.

Elizabeth returned to the doorstep.

"I told him our pedigree and our intentions. If he had stayed a little longer, I should have told him to keep out of our woodland. Now, my dear, it's time for bed."

Herbert rose stiffly.

"Everything is ready, is n't it, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, everything; the onions and the radishes and the lettuce and the peas."

"Does n't it make you a little uncomfortable to think of going about peddling things from door to door to strange people?"

“Not a bit! It’s just as honorable to sell onions as diamonds or books. I’m so proud of my garden sass, I’d drive to the gate of the White House and offer it there. And I don’t mean my patrons to be strangers, I mean them to be friends. It’s quite time that we made acquaintances.”

Herbert sighed as he went into the house. Elizabeth stood for a while looking at the illuminated landscape and thinking, not of the morrow or of the menacing gun, but of a deeper source of anxiety. Would Herbert never get well and grow up to be a man? She did not mind hard work, but she wished now to share responsibility. He was anxious to do his part, but he was like a child, requiring direction and encouragement.

It was well that the wagon was already packed with the produce which Elizabeth meant to offer, because in the morning she had but one thought — she would see the battle-field of Gettysburg. Her curiosity had been only half

gratified by her mother's answers to her questions and her meager accounts in her school histories had told her little more. She meant to try to find books which described the battle, so that looking from her doorstep she should be able to picture to herself in detail the conflict which, she believed, had saved her country. She was intensely patriotic; long ago she had hung from one of the upper windows of the old house a little flag.

The brother and sister spoke but seldom as they drove down the hills. The morning was clear and bright, they were young, and a great adventure awaited them. It seemed to Elizabeth that each old farmhouse must have some patriotic significance, that each old tree could tell tales of valor.

"I wish I knew what had happened on this road!" said she.

Herbert shivered.

"Do you suppose there was *fighting* here?"

"It's very likely," said Elizabeth. "There's

got to be fighting," she went on a little impatiently. "Everything we have has been fought and suffered for, Herbert. Why, look!"

She pulled the old horse up and climbing out of the wagon went to the side of the road.

"Here is a marker with an inscription on it!"

Even Herbert showed interest.

"Do you think Joe'll stand?" he asked.

"Either that or he'll lie down," answered Elizabeth gayly. "He won't run, that's certain."

Together the two read the inscription:

First Shot at Gettysburg

July 1, 1863, 7.30 A.M.

By Captain Jones, Lieut. Riddler and Serg. Shafer

Fired by Captain Jones with Serg. Shafer's Carbine

Co. E.

8th Illinois Cavalry

Erected 1886

Then they climbed silently back into the wagon.

A few miles farther on more elaborate monuments greeted their eager eyes, a Union general on horseback and a Union officer, booted and spurred, standing with field-glasses in hand, looking earnestly and inquiringly toward the west from which Elizabeth and Herbert had come.

"The Confederates must have come by our house!" said Herbert.

At the brow of the next hill they saw Gettysburg, spread before them. Beyond another rise they could see white marble shafts. To the right a tall building lifted its cupola above the trees of a thick grove.

"This must be the Seminary," said Elizabeth. "You remember there was a Seminary Ridge!"

Old Joe traveled slowly down the leafy avenue and at the first house stopped of his own accord. He had been a huckster's horse, a fact which accounted for various peculiarities.

Elizabeth went into the yard and offered her wares to a lady on the porch. She had looked at Herbert hopefully, but he made no sign of intending to act as agent.

“Good-morning. Do you need any vegetables?”

“Why, yes,” answered the lady. “I shall be glad to have vegetables. Now that we have a curb market in the town, no one stops here.”

“We have onions and peas and lettuce and radishes.”

The lady came out to inspect the wares.

“They’re fine! I’ll have some of each.”

When the bargain was complete, Elizabeth, in friendly fashion, told who she was. The crisp bill in her hand was an earnest of future success.

“Our grandfather was John Baring who lived in one of the old houses between here and Chambersburg. It stands a little back from the road on the first steep hill above Cashtown. Perhaps you’ve seen it?”

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The lady did not say. She looked curiously at Elizabeth.

"We mean to live there and raise apples. We came early in the spring and planted our garden and it has grown splendidly. You are our first customer. When would you like another supply? The day after to-morrow?"

The lady hesitated. Her expression had changed. Then she began to speak rapidly.

"There is a curb market, you know. I don't know whether you will find much business. Many people have their own gardens." She seemed to realize the contradiction between her first enthusiasm and this deterring advice, for she no longer looked at Elizabeth. "Perhaps you had better try to sell your produce at Chambersburg."

Elizabeth was mystified and a little hurt.

"Thank you," said she as she climbed back into the wagon.

She stopped at the next house and the next. At both, before she offered her wares she told

her name and her grandfather's name. She sold nothing, however, in spite of her friendliness. It could not be possible that her friendliness repelled these people!

From the porch of one large house a kindly old gentleman walked to meet her, book in hand.

"No, thank you," he said before she had time to speak. "We have a garden. But you have fine-looking vegetables and I wish you luck."

He even waved his hand as they drove away. Elizabeth liked him because of his smile and she wished that she might stop and talk to him; he would probably know all about the battle.

As for the old gentleman, he liked Elizabeth and spoke of her to his family. "A capable-looking soul, not pretty, exactly, but with unexpectedly blue eyes. She looked like an interesting girl."

"Now, Sherlock Holmes," said the old gentleman's daughter. "How did you make that out? You are always finding interesting persons."

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"From the way she looked at the book which I had in my hand."

Elizabeth made no more sales. In the end she disposed of the remainder of her goods at a store and turned Joe's head homeward. Herbert was depressed by their bad luck.

"Perhaps it is all a mistake!"

Elizabeth slapped the lines on Joe's back. Unconsciously she had taken them from Herbert and as unconsciously he had handed them to her. It was too late now to return them, but the next responsibility, however great or small, Herbert must shoulder.

"Of course it is n't a mistake! They were just supplied, that is all. We'll go on a day when there is no curb market."

In encouraging Herbert, she forgot her own disturbance of mind. "We have ten dollars, at any rate, and that is as good as found."

The June afternoon had grown cool; as the two drove across the grass to the doorway of the stone house the shadows of the mountain lay

darkly about them. The house looked larger; it might have appeared, to one who did not love it, sinister. In the stone above the door the name John Baring was deeply carved; it seemed to Elizabeth suddenly to have no relation to her; it looked strange as even familiar words may look at times. But she spoke in her usual soft, brisk tone.

“To-morrow we’ll try Chambersburg. It is so much larger and there will not be so many gardens. Stable your war-horse, Herbert, and I’ll make waffles for supper.”

Elizabeth went into her room, originally a sitting-room behind the larger parlor with windows opening toward the woods. On the floor lay a piece of paper which had not been there when she went away. She picked it up and carried it to the window.

“What in the world!” she cried. With difficulty she deciphèred the awkward writing.

This ant no place to rase apels. Nor yit for those what are kin to John Baring.

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As if to add the last touch of melodrama to his warning, the author had executed a sketch of what was intended to be a skull and cross-bones.

Elizabeth looked at the paper and turned it over. After a while she heard the sound of Herbert's footsteps and knew that in a second she would hear the familiar "Elizabeth!" This was not a responsibility to be shared with frightened Herbert. She laid the paper under the scarf on her bureau and crossed the hall to the kitchen, and there, as she moved about gathering her materials for supper, she had astonished and bitter thoughts.

"I did n't make friends with the neighbors at first because I thought they might feel under obligations to help us! I thought that was the Eastern way!" She looked out into the darkening woods. "This is a polite neighborhood into which we have moved!" said she.

Chapter II

WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH US?"

CHAMBERSBURG is a much larger town than Gettysburg, and to Elizabeth, who had bought her supplies there when she and Herbert had arrived in the early spring, it seemed now to promise more patrons. She would still be interested in Gettysburg and wished to learn all she could about the battle, but her relations with the town would henceforth be those of a tourist.

When morning dawned, she began to wonder whether Gettysburg's rudeness was not a product of her own imagination.

"No town is going to hang out banners because Elizabeth Scott has arrived to sell onions!" said she to herself.

Of the paper found upon the floor she said nothing to Herbert. The whole incident seemed fantastic. It was silly to have been disturbed for an instant. The sign of the skull and cross-bones

as an impelling threat had no longer any power, at least it should have none over Elizabeth Scott. It was doubtless the man with the gun who had thus favored her. Besides, she declined to be frightened by any man who spelled apples, "apels."

The distance to Chambersburg is longer than the distance to Gettysburg and the hills are steep. But the morning sunlight slanted through the trees, the birds sang, laurel bloomed everywhere, and there was a succession of sweet odors, many of which Elizabeth could not identify. The woods were for the most part still virgin and into their depths an occasional road or path invited.

In an open place they passed a park with pavilions and swings, where a queer old ruin which seemed the work of a fire stood against a hillside. It was not the ruin of a house or barn; it was difficult to tell what it was.

"I'm going to find out," said Elizabeth. "I'm going to learn all about this mountain. Perhaps this place was burned when Chambersburg was

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burned. That was a year after the battle of Gettysburg — that is, I think it was. It's hard to realize that there was fighting here or anything else but peace and happiness. As I remember, people had to flee from the fire for their lives. I suppose it's hard to forgive things like that."

She drove through the eastern part of the town and into the busy square, then she turned to the right. After she had driven several blocks, she began to offer her wares. As at Gettysburg, the beginning was propitious. The first purchaser asked whether they were newcomers, and Elizabeth told happily their history.

"We lived in the West, but after our mother died, we decided to come back to our grandfather's place and raise apples. My brother and I are alone."

"Where is your grandfather's place?" asked the lady kindly.

"On the road to Gettysburg."

"What was your grandfather's name? I know many families on that road."

"His name was John Baring. The house which he built in 1860 is still standing and in good condition and we live there. We —"

The stranger seemed to be indifferent to what Elizabeth had to say further.

"What name did you say?" she asked sharply.

"John Baring."

The lady's lips parted and a brilliant red appeared upon her cheeks.

"You would much better have stayed in the West!" said she sharply. "You made a great mistake to come back."

Elizabeth stared. She had brought the woman's order in from the wagon in a basket. Now, without taking out the articles, she lifted the basket and started toward the street.

"I did n't mean that I would n't buy your things this time, especially as I have ordered them!" came a loud protest.

Elizabeth made no answer. She went out of the gate and closed it carefully behind her.

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“Let us drive on quickly, Herbert!”

“What is the matter?”

“There is a crazy woman in there.”

“What did she say?”

Elizabeth's hot anger gave place to a keener feeling of alarm.

“Nothing worth repeating.”

“Shall we stop at other places?”

“Certainly.”

Elizabeth now treated her customers with peremptory shortness and the method seemed to pay.

“If you buy, buy quickly, but it really does n't make any difference to me whether you buy or not.” Thus said Elizabeth's bright blue eyes. It seemed that a new Elizabeth had come out from the rude woman's gate.

But Herbert could not long be kept in ignorance. They turned and drove back, offering the remainder of their wares on the other side of the street. When they reached the house opposite that of the first purchaser, Elizabeth had ap-

proached the porch steps before she saw that the woman had crossed the street and sat with her neighbor. The neighbor rose as Elizabeth drew near.

"You ought not to come here," she declared. "If people knew who you were no one would buy from you." The voice was not angry; it was earnest and kindly. "Don't you understand that?"

"Do you need any vegetables?" asked Elizabeth with burning cheeks. Whatever this strange mystery was, she was determined not to have it explained on the public street.

"No, I don't need any vegetables."

Elizabeth turned and went out. Herbert looked shrunken.

"Did the woman across the street speak to you like that?"

"Something like that."

"What do they mean?"

"I have no idea."

"Is it our name that angers them?"

"I don't know, Herbert."

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"Can you account for it in any way?"

"No."

"Did mother ever say that anything dreadful had happened in our family?"

"Never."

"She was a sad sort of woman. Could anything have worried her?"

"I never suspected anything." When the words were out, Elizabeth remembered long periods of depression.

"She never warned us not to come here?"

"She never thought of our coming."

"What shall we do now, Elizabeth?"

"I am considering that."

It was not until they had left Chambersburg far behind and had reached again the little park, that Elizabeth spoke. She lifted her head suddenly.

"Elizabeth, have you a plan?" It was a question often asked by her brother.

"Yes, I have a plan. To-morrow I am going to Gettysburg and I am going to call upon the

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old gentleman and ask him what is the matter with us."

"The old gentleman with the book?"

"Yes."

"Why are you going to ask him?"

"Because he is old and kind and because he probably knows all about the neighborhood. We seem to have some kind of a bar sinister on our escutcheon."

Herbert looked sidewise at Elizabeth. Thank fortune she could still joke!

"If we committed murder or theft or any other base crime, I want to know it."

"Elizabeth!" protested Herbert. Then he asked a little faintly, "Don't you want me to go with you?"

Elizabeth's eyes hardened. She had thought, of course, that Herbert would go with her.

"No; it is n't necessary. There is a great deal to be done at home and Joe will travel better with a light load."

Rising early, she called Herbert. The sun

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was up; it gilded the boles of the trees and turned the spider's webs to silver. If the old house had been a beautiful belle, one might have said that the morning was her hour. The sunlight fell upon the fine, severe old façade, showing all its sturdy strength of design and workmanship and making glitter each tiny point of quartz in the stone.

But Elizabeth did not think of its beauty. She prepared Herbert's breakfast and also his lunch, then she climbed once more into the wagon.

She did not remember until she reached the old gentleman's house that she did not know his name. Fortunately he was on the porch and rose to greet her. He was, as his daughter had said, always finding interesting persons, and he was also frequently disappointed in them. Few young people, he mourned, were willing to put their minds upon anything for any length of time, even upon the history of their own country and neighborhood.

"Good-morning," he said, recalling at once

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the blue eyes which he had admired. "Well, did you sell all your wares?"

"Yes," answered Elizabeth. She proceeded at once to the business in hand. "My name is Elizabeth Scott. I have come to live in this neighborhood and I wished to ask some questions about its history."

The old gentleman beamed.

"Sit down, sit down! My name is Thomas, and I am a crank about the history of this neighborhood."

"I heard some one speak on the street about Colonel Thomas — is that you?"

The old gentleman nodded.

"Pennsylvania is the most interesting State in the Union and this is its most interesting county. You will probably be sorry that you ever made my acquaintance, because, once started, I never stop."

Elizabeth smiled wistfully.

"Oh, no!"

But Colonel Thomas, upon whose lips vol-

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umes of information trembled, did not get far into the history of the county. He saw suddenly tears in Elizabeth's blue eyes.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"My brother and I have come here to earn our living. We were born in Illinois and there father died when we were children. Our mother lived until a year ago, then she died suddenly. I had expected to teach school, but my brother's health failed and the doctors thought that an entire change of climate might cure him. Mother still owned her father's property in this county, so we came here, expecting to plant an orchard. My brother is much better, even in these few months. We have a fine garden and we have tried to sell our things, but wherever I have gone people have insulted me and advised me to leave. I thought that perhaps you could tell me what is the matter with us."

The old colonel raised both his hands.

"On my life, young lady! I never heard of such a state of affairs. This is a pleasant, hospitable

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neighborhood. I was born here and have lived here all my life and I know it. What did you say your name is?"

"My name is Elizabeth Scott. But it is n't my name that excites them apparently; it's the name of my grandfather."

"What was his name?"

It seemed to Elizabeth before she answered that the expression of the kindly countenance had changed. A disturbing suspicion seemed to have entered Colonel Thomas's mind.

"John Baring," said she.

"John Baring!" repeated Colonel Thomas.

"Oh, my dear young lady! John Baring!"

"What did he do?" asked Elizabeth steadily.

"You've never heard anything about him?"

"Nothing. My mother was a quiet woman who spoke little about anything, but I am sure that she respected him and loved him. What did he do?"

"Oh, young lady, you have asked me a hard question. I have a friendly feeling for you, I —"

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"That is the reason I came to you," explained Elizabeth. "You looked at me in a friendly way."

"You seem like a young person of excellent common sense and composure. Do you wish me to tell you the whole truth?"

"By all means!"

"Will you come into the house? We might be interrupted here."

"Yes," consented Elizabeth.

Colonel Thomas led the way to a library whose walls were lined to the ceiling with books. If she had been less worried, Elizabeth would have exclaimed with delight. As it was, she gave a long sigh.

Colonel Thomas took from a shelf a thick book. Elizabeth could see on its back the title "Recollections of a Confederate General." Her heart stood still. Was their disgrace printed? What kind of disgrace could it be?

"Sit down."

Elizabeth obeyed.

"I should decline to tell you if it were n't inevitable that you should know." Even yet Colonel Thomas hesitated.

"I'd rather know it quickly, sir."

Colonel Thomas began to speak as rapidly as Elizabeth could wish.

"There was a certain fact long gossiped about in this county. It was said that John Baring had given the Confederates valuable aid when they came here and that he had even guided them a part of the way. Before that his neighbors had never dreamed that he was anything but loyal."

"Was it just neighborhood gossip?" asked Elizabeth. Her cheeks were pale, but her eyes held the old gentleman's bravely. "Was it confirmed in any way?"

Colonel Thomas opened his large book.

"Unfortunately a few months ago this book was published, 'The Recollections and Letters of General Adams,' a reliable witness. He describes the approach of Lee's troops to Gettys-

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burg and says this" — Colonel Thomas found the place and read — "'From John Baring we secured information about roads leading to Gettysburg.'"

"May I see it?" asked Elizabeth.

Colonel Thomas laid the book on Elizabeth's knee. She read in silence, with bent head.

"You see how the neighbors felt about him. He could not have done much harm, of course, because there were few roads and these were easy to find, and they could have got the information in other ways. He went away with the Confederate army and never came back. He was never seen here again, but it is not impossible that he lived for many years."

Elizabeth sat motionless.

"I remember now that his wife died after some years and his daughter married a stranger and went away."

Still Elizabeth did not move.

"It seemed kinder to tell you and prepare you to protect yourself against rudeness. Unfortu-

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nately, some local editor read this book and copied this letter and it has revived an old story which had better been forgotten. I fought against the Confederates, but I am willing to forgive. Perhaps there is some other place where you could make a home."

"Thank you," said Elizabeth. "You have done me a very great favor." She rose and handed Colonel Thomas his book.

Colonel Thomas grew more and more disturbed.

"Won't you partake of some refreshment?" he offered in his old-fashioned way. "I will call my daughter."

"No, I thank you. I have a long journey and I must start." She looked up at the old gentleman for a single brave instant; then her eyes dropped.

"We can't be blamed for the sins and mistakes of our ancestors," said he unhappily.

"No," agreed Elizabeth. "That is true." But she could not fail to see that, consciously or unconsciously, he glanced toward two old swords

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crossed above his mantelpiece. "Good-bye," said she.

But her farewell was not final. She had driven only a short distance when she turned old Joe round, facing him the way he had come. Her cheeks burned. Now she looked upon the marauders on her land in a new light.

"They probably think they can do as they please because we are despised!"

Colonel Thomas welcomed her.

"I'll always be glad to see you."

"I've come back to ask another question, which has to do with the present instead of the past. We have a good deal of woodland back of the house and men prowl about there constantly with guns and dogs."

"I know them!" said Colonel Thomas excitedly. "They have a settlement up in the woods."

"I spoke to one of them and told him that we had come to stay, and the next evening I found a scrawled note directing us to leave. It was even decorated with skull and cross-bones!"

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"There's only one of 'em can write and he learned in the penitentiary, that's Sheldon, a tall man with a drooping mustache. Was it he?"

"He's the one I talked to."

"They're a set of miserable rascals!" Colonel Thomas rose and began to walk up and down. "They've an interesting origin, but that's all about 'em that is interesting. They're descendants of the first squatters. The Colonial Government had a great deal of trouble with them, and since then they've been against everything, against the Government, against education, against religion, against law. During the war they were against the North, and the draft could n't reach into the mountains far enough to catch 'em. There's this Sheldon who served a term for arson — I sent him up myself when I was judge — and a heavy, short, black-bearded man named Black Smith — don't think it's 'blacksmith'; there's nothing so industrious about 'em! They all have pleasant descriptive titles, like 'Black' and 'Bud' and 'Bully.' But

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there's one institution they fear and that's the constabulary."

"Who are they?"

"They are the State police. If you are annoyed, let me know and there'll be a settlement. The law will stand behind you there."

Elizabeth rose once more.

"Thank you."

Colonel Thomas assured her again vehemently that he and the law and the constabulary would stand by her. "You would n't hesitate to ask me?"

It was evidently a relief to the old gentleman to be able to offer to do something for her.

"No," promised Elizabeth, "I should n't hesitate."

Colonel Thomas watched her until she turned at the top of the hill.

"Now she has a row to hoe!" said he aloud.

Chapter III

“I WILL NOT BELIEVE IT!”

ELIZABETH had a great deal of time to think on the way home. Old Joe, who in three days had traveled about fifty miles, could not be encouraged beyond a slow walk. But she did not think very connectedly. Mind and soul were weary; her troubles presented themselves rather as a dull, undefined pain than as a sharp anxiety. Things could wait, she said to herself.

It would be necessary, of course, for her to tell Herbert, and she trembled for the effect upon him. She had feared for weeks that his very nature had been affected by his illness and that he would remain a sort of dependent child instead of becoming a man. But what she had heard to-day threw another light on his condition. Could it be that it was an inherited weakness, the result of the shame which their mother must have felt? Their mother had been a woman of strong

will, but might it not have been that her grief and anxiety had affected Herbert? She must have felt her father's act to be a disgrace — it could not be otherwise. It was from that poor mother that Elizabeth had learned to love her country!

But not even the word of a Colonel Thomas and the printed statement of a book could in an hour or two alter the conscious and unconscious convictions of Elizabeth's life. The belief that one has been "well-born" is not easily yielded, even though one may have hitherto felt no conscious satisfaction. When, at last, she turned a weary Joe in upon the grassy drive, her lips were set.

"I don't believe it," said she stubbornly.

Herbert came to meet her and to take the horse. He glanced back over his shoulder into the woods. All day poor Herbert had been looking over his shoulder.

"Well, Elizabeth?" he asked nervously. "What did you find out?"

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"We will talk after we have had supper," said Elizabeth cheerfully. "You remember mother used to say that 'empty stomachs make cowards.'"

"All right," agreed Herbert.

Sometimes through the meal he looked at Elizabeth uneasily, but most of the time he seemed to be occupied with a trouble of his own. He had had that day a peculiar kind of anonymous communication meant for him and he was meditating upon it.

When the supper dishes were put away, the two sat down on the doorstep. The lovely weather continued, the rising moon shone once more over the beautiful plain, the whip-poor-wills called mysteriously.

"This is the home of my soul, the earthly home at least," said Elizabeth to herself. Then she laid her hand on Herbert's knee. "My dear, things are a little worse than I imagined. I visited the old gentleman and he tells me that our grandfather was supposed to have helped the

Confederates when they came into this county; he advised them, and is said also to have guided them. This was common report about here for many years. He disappeared with them and never returned. I suppose this must have been pretty well forgotten in all this time, especially as all the family had gone away, but a little while ago a book was published, 'The Recollections and Letters of General Adams.' This Confederate general said that John Baring had given them information about roads. That is why they hate us!"

"It is n't our fault!"

"No."

"What shall we do, Elizabeth?"

"We shan't do anything right away. We're here and we can live even if people won't buy our things. Our trees are engaged and we'll set them out. We —"

"Oh, let us go away!" cried Herbert. "We should never be happy, we should never see anything but scowling faces."

"We should n't make ourselves happy by going away," said Elizabeth. "The day would come when we'd regret it. And at any rate we shan't go unless things get worse. I shan't be driven away whether the story is true or untrue."

"Do you think that there's a chance that it might not be true?" faltered Herbert.

"I don't believe it yet," said Elizabeth stoutly.

"Why not, Elizabeth?"

"I don't know exactly. I just don't believe it. I should have difficulty believing such a thing about any living man whom I had respected, and I'll believe it still less about a man who is dead. Moreover, we owe it to ourselves to follow it to its remotest conclusion, Herbert. The possession of ancestors who are a credit is no small possession. But it's like good health, we don't value it till it's gone."

"Do you think we could make investigations and prove it untrue?"

"It might be possible." Elizabeth was pleased.

Herbert did not often make original suggestions.

"I'll do all the work on the place," offered Herbert, looking uneasily over his shoulder. "That is, if you have to go away anywhere. We have n't papers or records of any kind, have we?"

"Nothing."

"And you're *sure* mother never said anything?"

Elizabeth's brow puckered.

"I can't remember that she did. I have been trying to think. It must have been too dreadful to talk about and I wonder her heart did n't break." Elizabeth looked back into the dark hall as though she could see there a lonely figure.

"Have you any plan, Elizabeth?"

"No; except that I thought of hunting through the house. Years and years have passed, but there might be something. There might be a nook or cranny that had escaped the renters and that has escaped us."

"What do you think you might find?"

"I don't know," said Elizabeth. "Now let us go to bed."

The next day offered itself as a suitable time for indoor occupation. The fine weather had broken and rain fell steadily. The plain was gray, the woods were dim, there was all about the sound of running water, water dripping from the eaves and falling from the sky and running rapidly in the brook near the house.

"We'll begin in the cellar," said Elizabeth.

The cellar, explored inch by inch by the aid of lantern and candle, yielded nothing but resolutions that it should be thoroughly whitewashed as soon as possible.

"We can store bushels and barrels of stuff there," said Elizabeth as they came upstairs. "Now the first floor."

Beside the fireplace in the parlor were two deep cupboards for wood. These had been looked into often, but Elizabeth examined them again and scrutinized them earnestly to be sure that

they contained no secret compartments. But the interior was plastered smoothly.

On the first floor there were no other cupboards or closets, and the other rooms, occupied as a kitchen and as bedrooms, had been lived in for too many weeks to hold any secrets.

At the top of the first flight of stairs, Elizabeth stood still.

"Herbert, this place has inexhaustible possibilities! See these many rooms, how easily we could make this a comfortable place for quiet people in summer! Water could be piped down from one of the springs. I know that gravity alone would carry it higher than the house-top. I wonder whether John Baring thought of that!"

Elizabeth went into the first room. It was large and bare and offered no place of storage. She passed into the next and there for a moment she forgot the purpose of her search. The view from the front door was extensive, but from the second floor one could look over a spur of the

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mountain to the right and see other miles of rain-drenched plain.

"There is n't anything here, Elizabeth," said Herbert.

"No, nothing. Now we'll try the attic. That's the traditional hiding-place for documents."

The attic was as bare as the rest of the house. If the family had left any property there, it had been long since removed by the successive renters.

Herbert went downstairs for a candle and they crept into the low cubby-holes under the slanting roof. Mud wasps' nests and spider webs rewarded them.

"There is really nothing," said Herbert drearily.

"Yes, there is!" cried Elizabeth. "Here is writing on this beam. I can't quite stretch to it, Herbert. What does it say?"

Herbert dropped the candle from his nervous hand.

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed," said he

after a glance. "It does n't say anything about the battle."

"What does it say?"

"It says, 'I have built this house the best I know. God bless those who go in and out.' It's signed 'John Baring.'"

Elizabeth stood looking up at the inscription. Suddenly a tear rolled down her cheek.

"I don't believe he was a traitor," said she. "I believe he was a good man."

They went carefully over each beam, and crept again into the dusty cupboards.

"Now we'll go to the barn," said Elizabeth.

"What do you expect to find there?"

"I don't know, but I'm going."

As Elizabeth had left the attic for the last spot to be visited in the house, so she left the barn chamber as the most promising quarter of the barn. It was a large room on the main floor which had evidently been used at one time as a living-room, for there was an opening in the wall for a stovepipe.

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"I think the hired man usually lived in the barn chamber," said she. "And I suppose the harness was kept in these cupboards. This could easily be put in order for our chauffeur, Herbert!"

Herbert smiled faintly. He had opened the door of one of the cupboards and drew out an old map.

"There's nothing in here but this, Elizabeth."

"Let's unroll it."

Then Herbert grew white. It was a map of Adams County. From its center Gettysburg and the surrounding country had been cut, or rather slashed, as though it were done hastily with a large knife.

"What's the matter, Herbert?"

"Do you suppose he showed them with this, or gave them this piece?"

"No," said Elizabeth. "I prefer to think that some one cut that out to hide or destroy it. They might not have been able to destroy the whole map quickly. It signifies nothing whatever."

Herbert looked at her white face and shook his head.

After two days of rain the sky cleared. Brother and sister rested on the doorstep at the end of a long day. They had not spoken again of the writing or of the old map. Herbert wondered whether Elizabeth was now convinced. Elizabeth sat silently, drinking in the beauty of the evening. A faint gold showed where the moon would rise.

“Elizabeth!”

“What is it?”

“That man is watching us again with his dog and his gun. I can see him quite plainly.”

Elizabeth lifted her voice. All her depression and anxiety were transmuted into anger against these disturbers of her peace.

“I told Colonel Thomas in Gettysburg about the men who are prowling about,” said she loudly and distinctly. “He said the State police would be up here the minute I complained. From what I hear, there are enough crimes in the past

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to put these men where they won't bother us. They can be punished for these even if they don't do anything now."

For a while there was not a sound.

"I did n't see him go, but he's gone," said Herbert in a whisper. He clasped his hands tightly. Again he had had his anonymous greeting, and again by Herculean effort of will had kept it from Elizabeth. It was not only because of its ignominious character, it was because at last he was beginning to see his dependence. This was, moreover, his own trouble; it was not Elizabeth's, nor a trouble common to them both.

"I don't suppose they've had much chance," said Elizabeth at last; then she added bitterly, "When I first saw this man I thought perhaps we might help the women and children of such people. But now —"

She let her chin sink to her clasped hands.

"Have you any other plan?" asked Herbert.

"Yes, I have. I'm going to talk to the neighbors."

“What neighbors?”

“I’m going all round this country and wherever there is an old person, I’ll find out what he or she knows about John Baring. There must be some who remember him, and he must have had some friends among them. I believe that he was a good man and that he was kind.”

“But would that have any relation to this?”

“Yes, it would. Somebody might be able to give a clue.”

“What kind of a clue?”

“Well, somebody might have lived here, and have heard him refuse to guide the Confederates. The Confederates might then have killed him, or carried him away, or he might have met with an accident. Somebody might have some testimony about his previous loyalty.”

“But the book said he had given them information!”

“The general might have been mistaken in the confusion. Some one else might have given them information.”

Herbert shook his head. One could not move Elizabeth when she believed that she was right.

"The people might shame you or insult you."

"They can't do either."

"When are you going to start?"

"To-morrow morning. I'm going to leave you to guard the property."

Herbert looked at her startled. His short period of courage had passed. Again he was about to speak, then he covered his lips with his hand as if forcibly to restrain himself. The words which he choked back were, "Do not leave me alone, Elizabeth!" Poor Herbert rose filled with despair. When Elizabeth called good-night to him, he did not answer, being certain that he could not command his voice. He went into his room and to bed. But he did not sleep.

It was a long time before Elizabeth closed her eyes. Her mind traveled beyond her visits to the neighbors.

"When I have done that, what then?" said she. "If that fails, what can I do?"

It was not merely the rehabilitation of John Baring which depended upon the success of Elizabeth's plans, it was livelihood itself. She saw in her first drowsiness rows of young trees standing in attitudes which were humanly expectant, awaiting planters who did not come. She was at once wide awake. Suppose that no one would work for John Baring's grandchildren!

"I have signed the contract for the trees," said she. "It would really mean ruin!"

Chapter IV

A JOURNEY IN VAIN

ELIZABETH started out on foot, going northward along the eastern slope of the mountain. Here lay large and well-cultivated farms, and orchards which were already yielding large profits. Fences were well-made and clear of vines and briars, lawns were mowed, and in beds and on porches bloomed an abundance of flowers. She saw the windows of the Baring house abloom the winter long with geraniums — before the day was over she would ask for slips to plant for winter blooming.

She found few old persons. It was almost fifty years since the battle and farms had changed hands, some of them many times. She saw busy young men and women and tiny children, but no grandmothers or grandfathers. When she inquired she was stared at curiously.

At last in the middle of the morning she saw

on a farmhouse porch an old lady shelling peas. There was a cat at her feet which was purring a loud tune and the sound was a welcome to Elizabeth. She must have a cat — perhaps she could take a kitten home with her.

The old lady smiled pleasantly. She had bright, intelligent eyes and quick, deft hands. She invited Elizabeth to sit down and they exchanged views about the beauty of the weather and the promising condition of the crops.

“Have you lived here always?” asked Elizabeth.

“I was born in this house,” answered the old lady. “When I was married, we stayed here because my people were old. Now I live here with my son. I want him to get married, but he can’t find the right woman, though he could give her pretty nearly everything.” She looked at Elizabeth meaningly. “I might send him to get acquainted with you.”

Elizabeth smiled at this match-making.

“I have my own farm on my hands,” said she.

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"Where is that?"

Elizabeth took a deep breath. For a few minutes she had forgotten the cloud which hung over her. Then she told her story, Herbert's long illness, the advice of the doctors, their discovery that their mother still owned her father's property in Pennsylvania, and their journey East.

"We settled down here and made a garden, and then we started out to sell our things. I believe in being friendly so I told who I was. Immediately people seemed to be repelled, they treated me unkindly. Presently I found out that it was because of my grandfather and something he was supposed to have done."

The old lady looked at her intently. Her hands had ceased to work and she frowned heavily.

"What is your name?"

Elizabeth went over the old formula.

"My name is Elizabeth Scott; my grandfather's name was John Baring."

The old lady responded in deeds and not in

words. She rose and peas and pan fell clattering to the floor. The cat, startled out of sleep, dashed away, and all that had seemed a moment ago so friendly and peaceful was now inimical and confused.

"I can't sit with a granddaughter of John Baring!" said the old lady. "You made a mistake to come back here! Why, you're his image!"

Elizabeth sat still.

"Won't you hear me till the end?" she asked. This melodramatic behavior was, she believed, sincere. She was all the more anxious, unpleasant as the situation was, to ask questions.

"Well, what have you to say?" The old lady stood with her hand on the latch of the screen door, ready for instant flight.

"After I had been treated so rudely, I determined to find out what was the matter, so I went to an old gentleman in Gettysburg, Colonel Thomas, and he told me about John Baring."

"He could tell you the truth! He was a soldier himself. He knows what John Baring did!"

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"Yes, he told me the truth, at least what seems like the truth. Then I came home. It's very hard to learn suddenly that you are a descendant of a man whom his neighbors believe to be a traitor."

"He was a traitor!" cried the old lady. "There never was a worse traitor."

"When I came home, I went through the house, carefully, to see whether any papers belonging to him could have been stowed away and overlooked. I could n't accept this without doing something, could I?"

The old lady's hand dropped from the door-latch and she leaned against the wall, a sign of relenting in her eyes.

"I did n't find anything that referred directly to it," went on Elizabeth, "but I did find some writing on one of the beams in the attic."

"What writing?"

"It had nothing to do with the battle, but it had to do with John Baring. It said, 'I have built this house the best I know. God bless those

who go in and out.' That did n't look like the sentiment of a man who was a traitor, did it? So I thought I would try to see whether there were any persons who remembered him and who could tell me about him. Perhaps there is some mistake."

"Why did n't he come back?" demanded the old woman. "That was what finished him. There were some who could n't believe that he would do such a thing, but why did n't he come back? He went away with them and having chosen his company he stayed. Even his friends gave up then."

"So he had friends?"

"Of course he had friends. Everybody was his friend! But he was a traitor! He betrayed his own neighbors! My people lost everything but the actual ground of the farm. The crops were ruined, the barn was set afire, everything we had was taken, stock driven off. And this is a side road; they would never have known about it if they had n't been shown."

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To Elizabeth's astonishment the old lady was crying.

"May I help you gather up the peas?" she asked. "I'm afraid that I've made you feel badly."

The old lady stooped and began to fumble about.

"They can be washed," said she. Then she straightened up. "He was n't an ordinary man. It was like it says in the Bible, he was a star fallen from heaven when he did wrong. That was what we could n't stand, that *John Baring* should have done such a thing! Now the heathen back in the mountain, they would have done it and nobody would have been surprised. But *John Baring!*"

Elizabeth was ready to go.

"Did you know his wife?"

"She was my companion!" said the old woman. "And I never spoke to her afterwards. *I never spoke to her!*" In the declaration was a rage as fresh as though its cause were of yester-

day and — Elizabeth was certain of it — a wild remorse. “I did n’t even go to see her buried!”

Elizabeth wiped her eyes.

“Come again, if you want to,” said the old lady.

Then Elizabeth smiled. Grudging as the invitation was, it gave her the first faint hope that whatever John Baring had done, his descendants might in time make their way here in his old home.

She could see, as she left the yard, one more farmhouse and this she determined to visit. It was a mile away and was much smaller and less well-cared-for than the establishment she was leaving. There she found an old man, who stood leaning on the fence and chewing a straw. His working days were obviously over.

Elizabeth bade him the time of day and asked him whether he remembered John Baring.

“Yes, I remember him,” said he. “Everybody remembers him about here. He set Chambersburg on fire. Three million dollars was lost and

thousands of people set out on the streets and animals driv' off and all kinds of damage done. It was Baring done it. If he comes back, people will shoot him."

Elizabeth asked no more questions. He had become, it seemed, to some, a sort of legendary demon! But she saw him, reaching up to write on the attic beam, "I have built this house the best I know. God bless those who go in and out."

As she walked home, her body was weary, but her spirits were brighter than they had been. She imagined that he had gone to the attic on a quiet Sunday afternoon and had sat looking out over the rich and beautiful country.

"I don't believe that he was a traitor!" said she.

When she reached home she saw an automobile at the entrance to the yard. From it Colonel Thomas waved his hand, and she ran to meet him.

"Oh, won't you come in?"

"No, I thank you. I was anxious about you

on account of your neighbors. Have they given you any trouble?"

"No; they hang round, but they have n't bothered me."

Then, impulsively, Elizabeth told him what she had been doing. He shook his head.

"Oh, young lady, you'll find it a wild-goose chase!"

"They think he burned Chambersburg," said Elizabeth with a faint smile. "The situation has a gleam of humor, has n't it?"

"Why, the burning took place a year after he had disappeared!"

"I'd like to ask you some questions about the battle," said Elizabeth. "When I was a child, it was my dream to come here." Tears dimmed her eyes. The old gentleman saw them and looked away.

"I'll be up here again one of these days, then I'll bring you some books."

"And will you stop and visit with us for a while?"

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"Yes. You'll not take any risk with those rascals beyond you, will you?"

Elizabeth promised.

"They have only one accomplishment and that is shooting, but I don't believe you need be afraid of that."

For a day Elizabeth stayed at home. Herbert, who was always quiet, was even quieter than usual, but she discovered no clue to his depression. He was under no more of a cloud than she; he worked no harder; it was time that he lifted up his head.

When she started out on her next journey of exploration she knew that she was doing that of which the old gentleman would not approve. She went not to the north where lay the cultivated farms, but turned in toward the south on the old wood road which led into the mountain and toward the settlement of the mountaineers. She had no serious expectation of making any important discovery; it was rather with an Elizabethan desire to finish that which she had

begun. Among ignorant people like the mountaineers there were often old persons whose memories were long.

For almost an hour she went on without seeing a sign of human life. The towering trees interlaced their branches far above her head, sometimes she could see long distances, sometimes the view was cut off on both sides by thickets of rhododendron. She saw many deer; once a fox crossed her path, and partridges rose whirring. The road, if it could be called a road, rose gradually. Presently she had to pick her way over large clods of ground which had been dug up from the side and tossed into the middle. Some one was mending the road according to the inexplicable method followed in the neighborhood. A moment later she heard the sound of voices, and at the next turn she came upon three men working with mattock and spade. They worked close together as though to forget the lonely forest, and they talked loudly and a little nervously.

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At sight of Elizabeth they stared open-mouthed. No other sort of appearance could have surprised them as much as that of a young woman alone in the wood road.

"Good-morning," said Elizabeth.

The men did not answer her good-morning in kind, but made astonished inquiry.

"You are not alone, miss?"

"Yes."

"Where are you going, miss?"

"I'm looking for a house. Are n't there any on this road?"

The men looked at one another.

"There's houses of a certain kind. There's one round the bend; that's the nearest. But if I were you I would n't go any farther. There's a good deal of reckless shooting in these woods, miss, and the people ain't very hospitable except with bullets."

"*You* are n't afraid!" said Elizabeth.

"No, but that's different." The speaker scratched his head seeking a reason for the differ-

ence. "You see they know we ain't spyin' on 'em, and ain't likely to give any information against 'em. You see there ain't no women goes in here but a nurse sometimes, and she ain't afraid of nothing."

"Are there women living in there?"

"Oh, yes."

"If you call them women," said a second voice. "There's an old one in the first house."

"I'll walk that far," said Elizabeth. "You'll be working right here, will you?"

"Yes, miss."

She knew that the men did not begin to work as long as she was in sight. Suddenly one of them ran after her.

"She's a crazy old woman," he said. "But she's paralyzed and she can't hurt you. Don't be afraid if she hollers!"

She thanked him and he stood still and stared at her. When he returned to his mates, the three contemplated one another in silence.

"Could she be a teacher?" asked one.

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"They chased the last teacher away before she ever taught."

"I think we ought n't to make a noise with our implements, but we ought to move up closer," suggested the third.

The three moved slowly up the road one behind the other.

Elizabeth was thankful for the warning about the old woman's "hollering." It began suddenly and so near that she was startled. The cabin was hidden in a thicket; if it had not been for the shrill voice, she would have passed it. She parted the branches and looked into a little open space at a log house surrounded by heaps of wretched débris gathered in years of careless, slovenly living. She slipped in through the opening made by her arms and went to the door.

The single room held three pieces of furniture, a queer old charcoal stove, a bed made of saplings with the bark still on and covered with a mattress from which the stuffing of leaves was bursting, and a broken chair. The chair stood by

the bed and on it was a tin cup filled with some unrecognizable liquid and a part of a rough loaf of grayish bread. On the bed lay a pitiful old body of which only the dull eyes and lips and one hand seemed still alive.

The eyes peered at Elizabeth as though the room were dark.

"Is a human being coming to visit me in my misery?" asked the old voice.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, aghast.

"Are you the nurse?" the question was put with feverish eagerness.

"No, but perhaps I can do something to make you more comfortable."

The old woman began to cry loudly like a child.

"No, there ain't. He's been after me again, tormentin' me an' tauntin' me."

"Who's been after you?"

"My son. He wants the forty dollars what is all I have in this yearth, to buy him a gun, an' I want it to bury me. I want to be buried decent

with a preacher an' the singin' of psalms an' prayin' to carry me away from this yearth. He can't get it now, but he can get it when I'm dead." She began to scream, "I want to be buried decent! I want to be buried decent!"

Elizabeth went nearer to the dreadful bed.

"Why don't you make a will?"

"Learnin' is the possession of some, but not of none in the mountains," said the old woman. She began to cry again.

"I'll write a will for you if I can find anything to write with," offered Elizabeth.

The old woman made a desperate effort to raise herself on her elbow and thus see more plainly this comforting visitor.

"Will it hold in the courts of men?"

"It will hold if you have the forty dollars," Elizabeth assured her. "There are some men back here who will witness it, I'm sure."

Fortunately one of the road-makers had a dull pencil and an old envelope. But they were not so willing to help as Elizabeth expected. At last

after a great deal of persuasion the youngest consented to go with her. She wrote a brief statement and the old woman put a mark on it, and the road-maker signed his name as witness. Then he hurried away, glad to get out of the filthy cabin.

“Put it up there back of the beam, lady. It’s a place my offspring have never found.”

“Can’t I do anything to make you comfortable? I could heat some water and —” as she spoke Elizabeth looked round for a vessel or cloths or soap.

“Water shortens life,” said the old soul as though she were quoting a proverb.

Then Elizabeth asked her a question, because she had come to ask it, not because she had either expectation or desire of having it answered here.

“Did you ever know John Baring?”

Elizabeth made at once for the door. From the old lips fell a stream of denunciation, violent and profane.

"He lost the battle! It was him as did it! He lost the battle!" The old woman denounced not only John Baring, but his descendants to distant generations.

Elizabeth did not stay to hear the end. She stepped out into the road and walked rapidly back. At the bend, seeing the road-makers, she drew a deep breath of relief. They were still standing motionless.

"We did n't expect you'd stay long, miss."

"She's a dreadful old woman!" said Elizabeth.

"They're all dreadful, miss, but the fear of God's bein' put into 'em by the constabulary. They've built too many huckleberry fires—"

"What are huckleberry fires?"

"When they wanted a good crop, they'd light the woods and acres of trees would burn. They's always a good crop of huckleberries after a fire. But one of 'em, Sheldon, went to the penitentiary for it, and there ain't been any since. Now they's often a constabulary round and they know it. This was Sheldon's mammy what you

was visitin'. Sheldon has a strong-willed wife too. The women they's gettin' new notions. They go down sometimes an' look at the Chambersburg trolley, and they twist up their hair different. It's the women's day, miss."

Elizabeth thanked them for their protection, and walked on. After a while she smiled grimly. On the other side of the mountain they thought that John Baring had set Chambersburg afire. Here they thought he had lost the battle. But the battle had n't been lost. It was a benighted community, indeed!

Herbert was nervously watching for her when she reached home.

"You must n't do this again!" said he crossly.

Elizabeth looked at him. If Herbert was going to be cross in addition to being babyish, then she would have trouble.

"I shan't," she promised.

"Did you find out anything?"

"Nothing," said Elizabeth, protecting him once more.

Chapter V

AN ALARMING MESSAGE

ONE pleasant afternoon in July Colonel Thomas came again, bringing Elizabeth the books which he had promised. He made the journey not only for her sake, but to satisfy his own desire for an audience. He had begun to believe that the position of Elizabeth and her brother would not be intolerable if they had courage to persist. His car waited at the road's edge, and he walked in to the door.

"A car does n't seem to belong in here, does it?" said he.

"We're going to have one ourselves some day," declared Elizabeth.

"You're going to stay, are you?"

"I shan't be driven away. I've really had a peaceful time for three weeks. We sold our goods anonymously in Chambersburg." Elizabeth smiled wearily. "Please come and sit down. You are our first unarmed caller."

"They have n't bothered you again?"

"No."

"Perhaps they are really frightened," said Colonel Thomas. "I came up partly to see you and partly to have a look at the ruins of the old furnace."

"Do you mean the ruins near the park?"

"Yes; that was Thad Stevens's furnace and the Confederates burned it. Great man, Thaddeus Stevens, young lady, as great as the hatred felt for him and that's saying a good deal. He had a vision—the equality of men before their Creator and nothing else mattered, personal safety least of all. He lived here in this county from 1818 till 1842, and this county sent him to the legislature, as its representative. When he first came South, he saw in Maryland a slave girl being sold. He had three hundred dollars in the world to buy his law library, and instead he bought the girl and set her free. He was a representative from this district when he said, 'Hereditary distinctions of rank are sufficiently

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odious; but that which is founded upon poverty is infinitely more so.'

"I tell you —" suddenly the old gentleman thrust out his arms, as though to free his elbows from restraint. Then he leaned back and began to rock. His daughter, if she had been present, would have laid down her book and taken up her sewing and would have begun a long seam.

"I tell you that this is the most interesting State in the United States and this the most interesting county in the State. We had squatter troubles, whites pushing into the country which had not yet been bought from the Indians, and thereby endangering the safety of the whole border, men who refused to move back, pioneers of the finest water, but law-breakers in fact. It's interesting to think where the world would have been by this time if laws had n't been broken, if squatters had n't pushed on and buccaneers had n't sailed the main."

Elizabeth sat on the doorstep, her hands clasped round her knees. If only Herbert were

here! — but Herbert had ridden up into the woods.

“Then we had interesting Jesuit settlements, overflow by mistake from Lord Baltimore’s land to the south. We had all the ante-war troubles, slaves escaping over the border and claiming our protection. We protected ’em too with a flourishing underground railroad. But the brigands used to capture them; sometimes they captured our own free darkies and carried them off. There was a young black woman with her children who had lived as a free woman in our county, who was captured and carried screaming in the dead of night through the streets of Gettysburg, she and each of her children across the saddle of a rascal. A posse was made up, but they could n’t be rescued. In the end they got back, and one of those children grew up in my grandfather’s family. When the Confederates came she crept under the old valanced bed in the downstairs bedroom, and my little brother who crept in there too always remembered two

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details, the spurred feet of the officers which he could see under the valance and the deathly green-gray of that young girl's face. She must have been almost twenty, but the terror had never left her.

"Then we had the battle, and you will acknowledge that that was something!"

"Yes," said Elizabeth. "What happened about here at the time of the battle?"

Colonel Thomas stooped and picked up one of the books which he had laid on the doorstep.

"The best lengthy account of the battle was written by a famous Frenchman, the Count of Paris. Here it is." He turned from page to page.

"This will answer your question. This is after the first day's fight. 'Lee, having determined not to provoke a decisive battle until the concentration of his army was accomplished, must naturally have resorted to every device in order to complete this concentration before that of his adversary. This was easy for him to do, for two of his three army corps were entirely under his

An Alarming Message 79

control at the close of the first day. Longstreet was still absent. Pickett's division had remained at Chambersburg for the purpose of covering the defiles of South Mountain; an order to join the army was forwarded to him, but it could not reach him until the next day. The other two divisions, under McLaws and Hood, had started from Greenwood in the morning, after having successfully aided in the passage of Johnson's division.'"

Colonel Thomas stopped and looked at Elizabeth uneasily.

"Go on," said Elizabeth.

"They all followed the same road. Messengers were sent to expedite their movements; an extraordinary order which had directed the supply train to pass before them had caused a great loss of time which could not be repaired; in fact, the road, muddy and broken up, was encumbered by vehicles, loaded with provisions and ammunition, that were proceeding in the direction of the battle-field, and by others that were already

80 John Baring's House

returning with some of the wounded.' You see there was dreadful congestion and confusion."

Elizabeth looked at him steadily.

"Was that when my grandfather was supposed to have given them help?"

"Yes," answered Colonel Thomas. "They wanted to find another way to get in."

Elizabeth said nothing. But she thought of the old map with its center gone.

"But I don't believe it!" said she stubbornly.

Colonel Thomas acted upon impulse.

"I have been making some investigations," said he, quite as though he had not determined to say nothing whatever to Elizabeth about his investigations. "I looked again at General Adams's letter. His statement about John Baring is followed by a row of asterisks, signifying that something was omitted at that place. They may have forced your grandfather — that would be a mitigation. If I find anything, I'll straighten the matter out publicly; I promise you that!"

Then he rose to go.

An Alarming Message 81

"My brother will be back soon. I wish he might have seen you."

"I'd like to see him. But I'm a little late for an appointment now. I'll come another time. I'm old-fashioned and I don't like to think of you here all by yourself."

"I'm not afraid."

Elizabeth thanked him once more for the books, then she walked with him to his car. She watched it plunge down the mountain-side. Colonel Thomas was apparently afraid neither of speed nor of speed laws.

When she returned to her doorstep, she found another visitor, a tall, middle-aged woman in a serviceable blue dress with a white collar.

"I came down through the woods," she explained. "I'm the State nurse."

Elizabeth hastened to welcome her. Her cheeks glowed. Here was the sort of friendliness of which she had dreamed! Did the nurse know nothing about them, or did n't she care what their grandfather was said to have done?

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"I've been up to see Old Mammy Sheldon, and she tells me some one made a will for her. I met the road-menders, and they told me where you lived. I'm going to stop some day to talk about those wretched people, if I may."

"You may, indeed!"

"Next winter I'm going to have this side of the mountain for my bailiwick. I wonder whether you would take me to board and lodge?"

The nurse, watching Elizabeth, thought with a start that she grew pale.

"I will, indeed!"

Elizabeth walked with her guest to the road and watched her out of sight. Then she stood still. She had been meaning for days to attend to an important errand. On a cross-road a half-mile below them lived the farmer who had been recommended to her to set out the orchard, and it was quite time that the bargain with him was made. Now, without returning for her hat, she walked down the road.

She met the farmer at the entrance to his lane,

An Alarming Message 83

and there stated her errand. She had not got farther than the first sentence when she saw that he knew who she was and that her request was in vain.

“They tell me that you know all about setting out orchards.”

The farmer shook his head.

“Miss, I tell you how it was. My father lost everything in the war, even his own life. Then the Confederates came here and, thanks to John Baring, they found out all about us, and they took everything my mother had, all our money and stock, and they ruined our fields and gardens. I know it was part of war and all that. I forgive the soldiers. But I can’t forgive John Baring. I’m sorry to disappoint you, but I can’t work for you. I don’t believe I could stay in the neighborhood. Folks would n’t be friendly with me; that is the way it would work out. I know you’re all right, a good, law-abiding citizen, and I’m sorry for you. You see, the folks round here are afraid of the Baring stock, that’s

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the sum total of it. I *am* sorry for you, young lady. Ain't there any other place that you can live?"

"I've talked to people about him," said Elizabeth. "They all say he was considered to be a good man."

"Yes, I guess that's right." The farmer repeated his question. "Is n't there any other place you could live, miss? I tell you why I ask. That place has a bad name. Nobody who ever rented it had good luck. They died, or they went crazy, or the men did n't keep sober. You must know that it was empty most of the time."

"Why had it a bad name?"

"Well, of course I don't believe those things. But I've heard tell as how folks *saw* John Baring wandering about. He had a long white beard and he—"

"But he did n't have a long white beard!" contradicted Elizabeth. "He was n't an old man, he was n't even middle-aged! It's the mountaineers who go wandering about. They think the place is theirs."

An Alarming Message 85

The farmer looked at her and shook his head again.

"I would n't get their ill-will, miss. They're thieves, and they set things afire, and I expect they would n't stop at murder."

"I can't see why you citizens have allowed them to remain as they are all these years."

The farmer opened his gate.

"It's better to let some things be," he explained. "There are some things you'd better just stand, like skunks and weasels. They can't be brought to judgment, they're too all-fired sly and disagreeable."

Elizabeth climbed the road slowly. She saw that in another week the golden-rod would be in bloom. Already, though it was only July, a bright red branch of a gum tree showed here and there in the woods.

Then she quickened her steps. She had not seen Herbert since noon and that was a long time for him to spend alone in the woods. For several days he had been more quiet than usual,

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and she believed that he was growing more depressed. At first he had gained in strength and weight, but now he was losing. Herbert was all she had; it would be madness to carry her plans for him to the point of risking his life! They would go to a city; they would do anything in the world that he wished to do.

Then as she entered the yard the old place put its spell upon her once more. If this cloud could be removed, Herbert would be as anxious to stay as she. It was theirs, and never in the world could they possess elsewhere anything so beautiful.

To her astonishment Herbert had not come, though the woodland must be by this time almost dark.

"He rode to the upper end and Joe is slow as molasses," said she aloud for the sake of hearing a human voice. Then she set about preparing the kind of supper that Herbert liked. For a while she whistled; then her own whistling disturbed her. When supper was prepared she

An Alarming Message 87

walked to the edge of the woodland and called, then she walked back to the house. She remembered now that she had a new blow to transmit to him. If their orchards could not be planted, then they had reason for anxiety. At least she would not tell him until after supper. She said aloud her mother's proverb about an empty stomach. She knew as she said it that she was trying to keep out of her mind another thought.

But the thought was not to be put off.

"In a few minutes it will be quite dark!" said Elizabeth in terror. She walked again to the border of the woods, and again back to the house. She should never have allowed him to go alone. But he had proposed to look for traces of old boundary lines and she had consented, glad of his independence.

As she reached the edge of the woods once more, she looked back over her shoulder at the house. She had been in but one room and she felt suddenly afraid, afraid of the great bulk,

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afraid of the dark corners, afraid of the deep cellar and the cubby-holes in the attic. She turned and crossed the yard to the barn.

“If he has come back, Joe is here!”

But the stable was empty. Elizabeth then walked directly to the front door and back to the kitchen and there lit the lamp and lifted it from the table.

“Shall I find another vague notice?” said she to herself. “Or a positive threat of kidnaping?”

A notice was exactly what she found. Tossed in at the window of her own room, lying just where the first soiled scrap of paper had lain, was another. Upon it was the same gruesome sign of skull and cross-bones and below another ill-written message.

You bring that paper and you can hav him back.

“What paper?” said Elizabeth. “Have him back! Who! Where is he?”

But no voice answered, either from the house or from the dusky woodland.

Chapter VI

ANOTHER VAIN JOURNEY

ELIZABETH stood still, the lamp shaking in her hand. When at last she had taken the few steps between her and her bureau and had set down the lamp it seemed to her that she had accomplished a great feat.

They commanded her to bring back "the paper." What paper? Was it the will she had written for the poor old woman? Herbert's safety should not be jeopardized for that! It lay on the beam in her house. What had they done with Herbert? Had they carried him to some cave or den, or to some dreadful cabin like the one she had visited? Would they torture him, starve him?

Elizabeth quite lost her head. She looked again into the stable to convince herself that Joe was really not there. Then she started into the blackness of the wood road. As she went, she

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called, and the echo from the higher hill broken by the trees answered her faintly, "Herbert! Herbert!" Or was it a voice mocking her distress?

Before she had gone half a mile, she realized that nothing was to be gained by this procedure. She was not sure that she was still in the road; she had walked into trees, and long shoots of crow's-foot, which grew only in the deeper woods, reached out and grasped her ankles. If she lost the road, she would have to spend the night in the woods and that would not profit Herbert. She must start back while she was still sure that she could extricate herself.

Once more she seemed to hear voices, and called. If Herbert were near, he would answer. But when she stopped and listened, she heard only the murmuring wind.

Again she grew terror-stricken and started to run. There was no unhappy situation in Herbert's life from which she had not rescued him, whether it was from the small ills of childhood or

Another Vain Journey 91

the more serious troubles of his later days. She blamed herself now for having expected too much of him. He was still frail and she had required him to take the part of a strong man. For the past few weeks there had been not a coldness, but a silence between them. She should have told him the full extent of the hatred for their grandfather or she should not have left him alone.

Then she started to run. Now the road was comparatively smooth and she knew each turn. He must be at home. This was not the day of brigands! Surely she would find him watching for her, worried because she had not come!

But Herbert was not at home. The old house was grim and silent and empty.

Common sense directed that she should go at once for help. But who would help her on this inhospitable hill? Would people not rather rejoice in her misfortune? Who would venture now, at night, into the neighborhood of the mountaineers of whom every one was afraid by day? She thought of the words of the farmer.

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"There are things you'd better just be, like weasels and skunks."

She remembered all that Colonel Thomas had told her of them, of their certain aim, of their indifference to authority. It would be far better to negotiate with them herself, to go alone and make any concession to bring Herbert back. Then she and Herbert would flee from the home of their ancestors never, never to return.

It was now almost midnight and the distance to dawn was not long. Elizabeth sat all night at the window, listening, and certain that she heard occasionally the sound of a footstep. At the first sign of daylight she would start and go on foot to the old cabin and thence into the mountaineers' settlement.

Just before daylight she heard a sound and saw a dark form emerge from the woods. She leaned far out the window to see as well as she could. At first she thought it was Herbert, but it proved to be too large an object to be human. When she recognized old Joe, she rushed out and

Another Vain Journey 93

took him by the bridle. He was dull of vision and feeble of step and therefore ill-equipped to make his way alone through thickets and over rocks, but eventually instinct had brought him home, though he had suffered cruelly on the journey. His skin was torn by briars, his knees were bleeding from numerous falls.

Elizabeth caught the bridle. In the dim light she could see that it had been severed apparently by a knife. She talked to him as she fed him and brushed him gently.

“Oh, you poor Joe, you’ve got to start out again! I’m sorry for you, but I’ve got to go as fast as I can!”

In the first gray light she climbed on old Joe’s back. He gave a resentful whinny and then started into the woods in which he had recently had such perilous adventure. Once he snorted as though in alarm, and Elizabeth looked round sharply. But she could see no dangerous object, and Joe could not speak to tell her of a guard asleep under a tree.

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Little by little the woods grew gray; then the trunks of the trees turned pale gold. The chorus of the birds sounded from the tree-tops and from every thicket. It was the moment in which the cheerful heart is most uplifted.

But Elizabeth grew more anxious. She really expected that she would see Herbert, making his way homeward, but she heard no human sound, saw no human being until she came in sight of the little cabin. The road-makers were not at work, and the last bend of the road seemed like a door which would close behind her. No living soul would know where she was or where Herbert was, except their enemies. She had left no clue in the house, for she had carried with her in her pocket even the notice which she had found upon the floor.

When she came in sight of the cabin she heard Mammy Sheldon crying. Did the poor soul cry all the time, or did her ear warn her of the approach of a step, and did she then begin to sob and moan? She recognized Elizabeth

Another Vain Journey 95

and made a frantic effort to lift herself on her elbow.

"Don't give it to him! Don't give it to him!"

Elizabeth went close to the bed.

"What is it he wants?"

"He wants my last testament, so as to tear it up or burn it an' to have the money to spend for a gun. My money to be buried decent with a preacher an' the singin' of psalms. Don't give it to him! Don't give it to him!"

Elizabeth could see on the beam above her head the edge of the white paper, still undisturbed.

"Where is my brother?"

Mammy Sheldon looked long at Elizabeth. Into her eyes came a look of crazy cunning.

"They shot him," said she. "Of course they shot him! It was right outside this door."

Elizabeth laughed hysterically.

"What nonsense! They did not shoot him! Where is he? I helped you; now you help me."

The old woman laid her head down on her

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poor pillow. She began to cry once more about a decent burial. Whether she was trying to deceive, or whether her mind could not hold an idea more than a moment, it was hard to say.

Elizabeth walked to the door and looked out. The tall trees, the glimpses of sky, the brown earth covered with a carpet of pine needles and dead leaves — this was surely no place of execution! Only the loneliness and the dreadful sound were ominous; there was no bird's song, even in the early morning, loud enough to make itself heard above the wild sobbing.

Elizabeth went back to the bed.

"Where is my brother?" she demanded. "They must have come to the house yesterday and compelled him to come with them."

The old woman did not answer.

"They want a paper. Is it the paper that I wrote for you?"

The mention of the "testament" caught Mammy Sheldon's attention.

"Don't give it to them! They'll take my

Another Vain Journey 97

money and bury me like a dog. Don't give it to them; oh, please, oh, please!"

"I shan't if you tell me what they have done with my brother."

"They don't tell me what they do. I'm away off yere from 'em. But they'll get their pay! Their children'll treat 'em as they've treated me!"

"Where are the people that feed you and take care of you?"

"Buried," answered Mammy Sheldon. "Dead and buried."

"They are not dead and buried! Some one brought you food within the last few days."

But no further answer was to be had from the old woman. She seemed now to be asleep.

Elizabeth stood for a moment considering. Then she reached up and pushed the will a little farther back on the beam. There it could not be seen, but she could direct them where to find it. She would pay the old woman's funeral expenses if they destroyed the will and if she died penni-

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less. Forty dollars was nothing compared to the precious life which might now be in danger.

Clambering to old Joe's back, Elizabeth started to go farther into the woods. For herself she had not the least fear. If she could only see Sheldon and find what they wanted of her! Sometimes she bravely determined to hold out against them even if it were only the will which they wanted. The old woman should do with her money what she chose, they should not coerce her! They would get tired and let Herbert go; they would not risk their lives for the sake of forty dollars! If she gave them the will, she would only be doing what all the other inhabitants had been doing for generations, ignoring their crimes for fear of reprisal and giving them a free hand. It was no wonder they had no fear of God or man!

But they had actually carried off her brother! It was difficult to hold to any principle when one remembered that!

As she rode on, looking eagerly from side to

Another Vain Journey 99

side, another suspicion entered her mind. Was it possible that they suspected Old Mammy Sheldon of having revealed some secret of the past, some hidden crime? The farmer had said that they would not stop at murder. The old woman had talked about some one who was shot and buried. Elizabeth shuddered.

Presently she came to a place where the dim road divided, one fork going toward the right, the other bending toward the left. There was nothing which indicated the way to the mountaineers' settlement, except that the right-hand road seemed to run against an almost perpendicular section of the mountain-side. The lay of the land seemed to indicate that that road did not go far.

Selecting the road to the left, she rode on, not noticing at first the gradual descent. Nor did she hear back of her the sound of hurried footsteps. The man at whose sleeping presence Joe had snorted, paused, panting, at the fork of the road where she had paused. He looked up and down

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the road into the forest, and even, in a foolish way, up into the air. Then he ran on to the right.

Presently Elizabeth began to be doubtful about her choice, but she decided to ride a little farther. When at last she was about to turn back, she found that she had been riding for a few rods in a little glade and that the road had vanished, either having ended, or having turned imperceptibly in another direction. She gave Joe a free rein, but Joe seemed to have no wisdom about wood roads.

Now she shed a few tears. She was afraid to go upward for fear that she would be more hopelessly lost. If she went directly downward, using the slope of the mountain for her guide, she would be going each moment farther away from Herbert. But that seemed to be the only possible course to follow. Dismounting, she led old Joe, who slipped and slid and frequently whinnied his distress. She would find her way home, and then there should be no further delay in call-

Another Vain Journey 101

ing Colonel Thomas's constabulary to her aid. It was criminal to have delayed so long.

Once, when she stopped to let Joe rest, she was confident that she heard, dim and far away, the sound of a gunshot. There was no following shot and she was not sure that she was not mistaken, but the possibilities suggested by the sound horrified her. She rose and took the unwilling Joe by the bridle and went on over stones and rocks. She saw masses of arbutus plants and beautiful carpets of pine leaves with a pattern of trailing crow's-foot; she passed through stretches of cathedral woods. She saw strange flowers which looked like orchids and high, deep thickets of rhododendron, set with pale blossoms. A month ago she would have exclaimed with delight; now she scarcely observed them, or said to herself while she looked, "We are going away." Late in the afternoon she saw suddenly a stone fence and a weed-grown field and recognized her own property. Then the old house showed through the trees and she pulled Joe rapidly forward.

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"Herbert!" she called, "Herbert! Herbert!"

But no Herbert answered.

After stabling old Joe, she hurried to the kitchen. She would get a bite to eat, then she would smooth her hair and change her dress and go directly to the road, there to beg a ride from the first passer-by. Old Joe could not have carried her for a square. Her spirits rose. If there was something one could do the situation was more tolerable.

When she opened the door of her room, she saw that a new scrap of paper lay on the floor. With trembling hand she took it up:

Him in exchange for the paper. It will be wuss for you if you git any one.

She sat down heavily on the edge of her bed. The thought of the constabulary riding to her aid had all the afternoon sustained her. Then she lifted her head.

"I *will* go," said she. "They won't shoot me, that is certain."

She looked at herself in the mirror. Her hair

Another Vain Journey 103

was untidy and sifted over it were twigs and dust and the pollen of flowers; her face was soiled and scratched, her eyes looked wild. She made as rapid a toilet as she could, and then she started out. It was already almost dark, so long had been her dreary journey. She started to run.

Then she stopped. She might have been uncertain in the afternoon whether or not she had heard the sound of a gunshot, but now there was no mistaking. It seemed to her that the bullet passed immediately before her, that she heard its whistle. It said to her as distinctly as if a voice had spoken, "Stay where you are!"

She went back to the house. Only a fool would have gone on after that sort of warning. But she did not go indoors. She stood on the step and called.

"Come here and talk to me. I'll listen to what you have to say! Don't hide like a coward!"

But there was no answer. Perhaps when it was still darker they would come. She sat down in her corner of the step and leaned her head against

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the wall. She would be here if they came, she would — she would — her head nodded and she was asleep.

When she woke it was in answer to an abrupt summons. She heard simultaneously another shot and a little sharp crack and some object fell from above upon her head. She thought it was a fluttering bird and put up her hand. But the texture of the object was that of cloth. It was the flag which had been shot at! Elizabeth stood with it in her hands. Colonel Thomas had said that the mountaineers had been in sympathy with the enemies of their country. Was this generation traitorous also? Every fiber of her being stiffened with resentment. Yet, alas! John Baring —

Again she stood on the step and called angrily.

“Come and tell me what you want! Don't hide like a coward!”

But whether the watcher was deaf, or whether he was merely a sentinel without power to act or to answer, he made no response.

Another Vain Journey 105

She carried the flag into the house and lighting the lamp, examined it. In it were half a dozen bullet-holes. Then she ate a hastily prepared breakfast and set out into the woods. Once more daybreak was at hand, and this time she would not miss the road to the settlement.

Chapter VII

“MAMMY’S BOY”

HERBERT SCOTT was not a coward — indeed, his errand, deep in the woods above the Baring house on the afternoon when Colonel Thomas came to see Elizabeth, proved him courageous.

His anonymous and unpleasant communications had not been threats or warnings, but taunts. The mountaineers seemed to have come to the conclusion that he was worth nothing, that he was a mere appendage attached to the proverbial apron-string of his sister.

The taunts were never uttered when Elizabeth was within hearing. Herbert, bending over a garden-bed, heard from the woodland a shrill “Mammy’s boy! Mammy’s boy!” then a laugh. At first he had walked directly toward the sound, but he never could see who had uttered it. He knew, sometimes, that the speaker receded before him; there was a rustle in the leaves and un-

derbrush, and sometimes the call was repeated at increasing distances. But more often, he could neither see nor hear a living soul.

But now, on the afternoon when he had gone to look up the boundary lines, the taunts changed to a more serious approach. Suddenly he found himself looking into a gun-barrel. He recognized at once the holder of the gun and stood still. He did not throw up his hands or make any sign of surrender, but he felt the blood recede from his heart.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want that paper," answered Sheldon, sullenly and with determination. There was also another quality in the thick tones — could it be fright?

Herbert was wholly mystified.

"What paper?"

"The paper the girl got from Old Mammy. Mammy's holdin' it up to tease me! Mammy's crazy; what she says won't go, but we want the paper."

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"I don't know anything about a paper."

"You lie!" cried Sheldon.

A little of the blood returned to Herbert's heart. He squared his shoulders.

"I do not lie!"

"You've got it hidden somewhere to make trouble. Fork it out! We won't make no trouble for them that makes no trouble for us. She got the road-maker to help her; one of them writ his name on it. Mammy brags about it."

Herbert was completely bewildered.

"I know nothing about it."

"Well, then, you come with me an' perhaps you'll learn something."

"My horse is tied over there."

"Don't worry about your horse. Come on."

Herbert obeyed. There was no question as to the seriousness of Sheldon's intentions and there was no question about the deadly power of his loaded gun. He led the way slowly and cautiously down through the woods toward the house. Did he mean to corral Elizabeth also? Even in his

terror and despair Herbert hoped that Elizabeth was not at home. Surely she could have no paper which belonged to these desperadoes!

Before they reached the edge of the woods where they could look out on the old house, two men met them. One was a shorter man than Sheldon with glowering eyes and a black beard which made him look like a pirate. Elizabeth would have recognized him as the "Black Smith" whom Colonel Thomas had described. The other was "Bud."

"She's went off," Black Smith announced. "She's far down the road."

"Come on," ordered Sheldon. "We'll find that paper."

He marched Herbert into the kitchen and made him open the doors of the cupboard. Then they went through the house, from cellar to attic. Confident that he would find nothing, Herbert searched thoroughly. Under Elizabeth's bureau cover, he found the two warning papers. His eyes blazed.

"I never saw these. I should think you'd

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be ashamed of yourselves, big men trying to frighten a girl!"

"And a little mammy's boy!" said Sheldon in an ugly tone.

Then Sheldon took from his pocket a stump of a lead pencil and another piece of paper and wrote another bulletin.

"She'll know what to do when she finds that," said he. "Now march!"

Herbert went out the front door and round the house into the woods as he was directed. At the wood's edge, Black Smith fell in with them; the other remained behind.

"What are you going to do with my sister?" demanded Herbert.

"I don't know and I don't care," answered Sheldon. "I want the paper, I don't want your sister. Wishin' she'd come an' take care of you, are you, mammy's boy?"

Herbert made no answer. Now Black Smith took a share in the conversation.

"The mountain people don't stand for no non-

sense," said he. "They ain't like the people of the plain. The people of the plain says one thing and means another, while the mountain people says one thing and sticks to it. The mountain people —"

"Shut up!" commanded Sheldon, whether in weariness of Black Smith's loquacity or because he thought silence best, it was hard to say. There was a surprising sentimentality about Black Smith.

"You talk too much," said Sheldon.

The three looked back. From their position they could see past the corner of the house to a spot of color still vivid in the afternoon light. Sheldon lifted his gun.

"Don't do that!" cried Herbert.

But Sheldon only laughed. A bullet struck the spot of bright color and the flag fluttered a little.

"Hit it!" said Sheldon with satisfaction.

"You rascal!" cried Herbert.

Sheldon laughed again as though pleased with himself.

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"I shot at that rag many times," said he. "Off with you! March!"

When they had penetrated into the deep woods, Herbert remembered poor Joe.

"I told you that my horse is tied up there," said he. "He can't even crop the grass."

"We'll settle him," said Sheldon. To Herbert his tone was vicious. Would they shoot the poor beast or torture him?

But Sheldon had no such cruel intention, although he lifted his gun at sight of the old animal, now restless and whinnying.

"Oh, don't!" cried Herbert.

The bullet did not touch the horse, but only the strap which held him. Joe lifted head and heels. The quick motion tore the pierced bridle through and Joe was gone, bounding over the rocks and through thickets as though on a smooth race-course.

Once or twice Herbert was given directions to walk toward the right or the left. Otherwise his captors did not speak. Black Smith had evi-

dently accepted reproof, for he said no more about the "mountain people."

Herbert began presently to stumble over stones and projecting roots. It was now almost dark and his head was dizzy. They seemed after a while to have stepped into a rough road, even a road upon which some work had recently been done. If so, he was not being entirely separated from the rest of mankind. Then a thought startled him. Sheldon had spoken of road-makers in connection with this mysterious paper. There evidently had been road-makers in the neighborhood. But Elizabeth could not have come as far as this!

At last, when it seemed to Herbert that he had walked almost all night, he began to hear voices, and in a moment saw a faint light. The light was darkened, apparently, by the passing of an object before it. Another man joined them, and still another.

"Sit down!" ordered Sheldon.

"Where?" asked Herbert.

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Sheldon took him by the arm and guided him to what appeared to be the doorway of a cabin. He sat down, breathing uncomfortably a heavy human and canine odor which seemed to emanate from within the cabin. Sheldon whistled and Herbert felt a panting creature pass him.

"Watch him!" ordered Sheldon.

Herbert heard the sound of retreating steps, of other growls, of voices near at hand. One was a woman's.

"You'll bring destruction on yourselves!" she cried. "You're plottin' an' plannin' your own ruin an' downfall! The State police won't stand the carrying off of men, they —"

The speech ended abruptly, almost as though a period had been put to it by force.

Herbert heard Sheldon's sharp "Shut up, Jinny!" and another whine from Black Smith about the "mountain people." Then he sat motionless, hearing the heavy breathing of the watch-dog, though he could not see him. When he stretched out his tired legs, the dog growled

menacingly. He had seen either this dog or one like him with Sheldon, a tall, gaunt animal with a bristling collar of fur, and he had no intention of risking an attack.

His eyes strained in vain to pierce the darkness, but he could see nothing, not even the light. He surmised that there were tall trees near by; he could hear the leaves stirring gently far above his head. Even the voices had ceased to sound. Had his captors gone to bed, or had they shut themselves in somewhere to discuss his fate?

Sometimes waves of weakness rushed over poor Herbert, but they were not waves of fright. Elizabeth would long ago have found the paper and would have gone for help. He believed that by morning he might expect her. The summary treatment which he had received had wrought a change in him. The high-handedness of his capture enraged him. He lifted his head and said the words that Elizabeth had said weeks before, "They shall not drive us away!" He had no

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affection for the house of John Baring, and he shared but few of Elizabeth's fond dreams of clearing his grandfather's name of its stain, but he would not be coerced in this fashion. He despised the neighborhood which had for so long tolerated these desperadoes.

He was mistaken about the flight of time. Twilight had seemed to come early because the woods were thick and because it was cloudy, and the journey had seemed hours long because of his weariness. It was not yet eleven o'clock when Sheldon and Black Smith returned with the two other men. Did these, together with the man left at the house, represent the total able-bodied forces?

They carried with them old lanterns, made of tin and pierced with holes, and they sat down in a semi-circle before the door of the cabin or dog-kennel whichever it might be. Sheldon, who seemed to lead them in everything, spoke first.

"Now, boy, we want that paper, an' we believe there is one way to get it. You write an'

tell your sis to send it up here. Then you can go, prompt."

Black Smith was, it seemed, like many orators, not to be permanently suppressed.

"People have got to be learned that there's no foolin' with the mountain people," said he.

"I don't know anything about any paper," insisted Herbert. "My sister did n't tell me anything about a paper."

"You don't need to know anything about the paper," said Sheldon. "We tell you that the girl got a sworn paper from Mammy an' Mammy's out of her head an' she talks too much. She don't know what she's sayin', but a sworn lie holds for the truth." He leaned forward and laid a scrap of paper on Herbert's knee. "You tell her that you're here an' that you're safe, an' that she shall send the paper, then by morning you can go."

"I can't make her send it."

Sheldon laughed.

"She'll send it to get her baby boy!" said he.

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The insulting words brought Herbert to his feet.

"She won't do anything of the kind. She's gone for help, long ago, I can tell you that. Do you think she'll sit down there and do nothing? You don't know her! We were told that the instant you gave us any trouble we could have the constabulary come up here. They'll wipe you out! They've got your deeds recorded! They'll punish you for the present and the past."

A dark figure appeared in the faint speckled circle of lamplight.

"I told you so!" said the woman's voice, which Herbert had heard before. "Destruction is waiting for us! Destruction from our airless lives, according to the nurse, and destruction from the guns of the soldiers."

Sheldon rose muttering.

"Git out of here, Jinny!"

The woman moved backward.

"She's exactly right," said Herbert. "One of you has sense, anyhow!"

But Jinny's tirade was not taken seriously by her kinsfolk. Sheldon returned and sat down heavily.

"You don't suppose, boy, that we left her free to run round over the country, do you?"

Herbert shivered. Was a gun-barrel pointed also at Elizabeth? Nevertheless, he did not believe that she would follow the dictation of any gun-barrel. He saw the desperation of these outlaws on one side and Elizabeth's indifference to danger and her anger at injustice on the other. There was also another element. Elizabeth would be wild with fear for him. At that thought Herbert's cheeks reddened in the darkness. She would not expect him to be able to help himself!

"Write what we tell you," said Sheldon, tapping him on the knee.

Herbert glanced down at the paper. The dark night, which seemed actually to press down upon him, the encircling men, the den behind him, the ferocious dogs lurking in the shadow—he was acutely conscious of all. He had always

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been taken care of by Elizabeth, and now he saw the words formed by his hand, "For my sake, Elizabeth, send them whatever paper you have!"

But what paper was it? Why had she not told him about it? She had no business to keep him in ignorance! What motive could she have had?

Then Herbert answered his own question. Elizabeth's motive was never a selfish one; she wished always to spare and defend him. Perhaps she had thought that she had found a clue, and losing it, had not wished to disappoint him. Perhaps she had come upon some fact which had ended all her hopes. She had seemed quieter of late. Perhaps, on the other hand, she had really found a clue, and by appealing to her to save him, he would spoil everything.

He looked up. He believed again that, even in the dim light, he saw fear in the scowling faces. What dreadful secrets this distant corner of the mountain might hide! What crimes might have been committed here, undiscovered, perhaps unsuspected! An old woman might well, in her

dotage, cry out facts at which her family would be terrified! The blood now rushed through Herbert's veins.

"You've told her what you want," said he. "She'll have to decide for herself. I won't write anything — not a word!"

There was an angry murmur. Black Smith began to declaim.

"You need n't think the mountain people'll stand for such talk," said he wildly. "You —"

"Shut up!" commanded Sheldon.

Then Sheldon himself uttered a sentence of more weighty import. He accompanied it with a sharp stroke of his fist on Herbert's knee.

"We can bury you in the grave with your gran'pappy, if that's what you want," said he. "He was a betrayer."

At that there came a cry from outside the circle. Again Jinny had come close to the group in front of the cabin door.

"You'll see destruction soon enough!" she warned.

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Sheldon got to his feet and whistled. Two great dogs bounded toward him.

"Watch him!" he commanded.

At once he and his mates went off into the darkness.

Chapter VIII

BLACK SMITH'S BARGAIN

IN spite of the exertion of all her power of will, which was not small, Elizabeth found her step lagging as she went through the woods. The strenuous efforts of the last days and her abbreviated hours of sleep had naturally exhausted her. She had to sit down often to rest. As she did so, she looked first to this side, now to that. She was certain that she was watched each moment. Once she called, "I know you are there! Don't hide like a coward, but come out!"

There was no answer, though Black Smith, appointed over her for the night, and now following her, heard her plainly. Black Smith had not slept at his post as had her guardian of the night before.

When she approached the old woman's cabin she could hear no sound. She would go in and get the will and carry it with her.

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But she did not enter the cabin. On the step lay one of the cross dogs of the mountaineers, who, when she spoke to him, rose and growled fiercely. She backed out of the thicket.

At the forks she took the right-hand road. She had gone only a short distance when she heard behind her the sound of footsteps, and turned and looked toward the bend round which she had come. Black Smith had decided to accompany her instead of stalking her.

"Stop!" he called.

Elizabeth stood still, recognizing him at once from the description of Colonel Thomas.

"What do you want with me?"

Black Smith grinned at her.

"It ain't no use to come here unless you got the paper."

Elizabeth backed against the tree, appalled by the savage aspect of Smith.

"I have no paper that would be of any value to you."

Black Smith came closer.

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"You made out a paper," he insisted. "We heard tell of it. You can't keep things secret from the mountain people. You've got to get it for us."

"That was a will made for the sick old woman," explained Elizabeth. "She was afraid that her son would take her money for a gun and she would not have decent burial. I made a will for her."

"There was other things on it!"

"There was nothing else on it!"

"She says there was."

"Then she does n't tell the truth!"

Black Smith came still closer. The odor of liquor was strong on his breath.

"Well, then, git the paper! No paper should be written by strangers in the settlement of the mountain people. There's those of us can write. If papers is to be writ we can write them. An' we can read what is on papers that has been writ. You fetch this paper an' we'll tell what's on it."

Elizabeth hesitated. The old woman could

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hardly be made more miserable than she was. She would go and get the paper now and Herbert should be free.

Black Smith was impatient with her delay. He looked at her menacingly.

"Look here. Your brother ain't gettin' much to eat while you're foolin'! He sets all the time an' cries for his mammy, that's what he does! We know his kind, an' we have no use for such folks among the mountain people. We know what else was on that paper beside a will, an' you know."

"I've told you all that was on it!" Elizabeth's answer was almost a scream. "You and your mountain people are wicked!"

The man scowled still more heavily. It seemed to Elizabeth that the time for delay was past. She was about to say, "Come on, I'll find it for you!"

Then Smith's words halted her.

"Your brother can find place in the grave with his gran'pappy, that he can. The mountain

people did n't take nothin' from him, I can tell you!"

Elizabeth's hands pressed close upon the coarse bark of the tree against which she leaned. The pressure hurt, but she wished it to hurt. It seemed to her that physical pain would help her to clearness of thought. Once she feared that she was going to faint, then strength came back. Was she to hear even from these evil lips mockery and reproach for John Baring? Had these been his friends? Had he, perhaps, hidden here among them, had he taken refuge with them? They, too, were enemies of their country — one of them had fired upon the flag! Did John Baring die here, was he, perhaps, killed by them after some quarrel? Was it he who, in the old woman's words, had been "shot and buried"? Was there any truth in anything they said?

"It ain't a hundred yards away where he lays," said Black Smith. "He went counter to the mountain people, an' see what become of him! Will you give me the paper?"

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Elizabeth bent her head. John Baring had ruined the lives of many of his kin; he should not destroy Herbert's. Again she determined that she would give them the paper and provide so that the old woman should have the decent burial that she craved, and then they would obey the advice of friend and foe and go away.

That is, they would go, if it were not too late. She did not believe that they would starve Herbert, or that he sat crying for her. But he might be ill.

"I will —" began Elizabeth.

Then, suddenly, Elizabeth stopped. The arching trees seemed to contract into the ceiling of a low room, she smelled not the fresh, living, woodsy odors about her, but the odor of dry wood, of old beams and broad ceiling-boards, dried for fifty years under a roof. She saw herself rising on tiptoe to read, and she heard Herbert's voice.

"I have built this house the best I know. God bless those that go in and out."

Black Smith's Bargain 129

For a moment Elizabeth saw more than the writing, she seemed to look into a pair of sad and steady eyes. Once more in a rush of confused emotions a wave of semi-unconsciousness passed over her and she found herself pressing her hands again hard against the rough bark of the old tree. Her eyes, staring at Black Smith, looked wild. She saw a scene of which she often dreamed, the old house surrounded by armed and mounted men. She heard the creak of wagons, the steady, rhythmic beat of marching troops, the cries of the wounded, already being carried to the rear, the throng and press which filled the steep and narrow road. She saw the clear blue moonlight over the wide plain, and the flaring torchlight at hand; she seemed to see John Baring standing in his doorway, looking at it all, hearing a question, a demand which could not be put off. It may have been that his wife stood beside him with her baby in her arms.

"I have built this house the best I know." He had intended to live here long years, to die here

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decades from now — perhaps that intention went through his mind.

But he had not been given a long time for dreaming. He must decide at once. There was probably a heavy hand on his shoulder, a harsh voice at his ear.

“Here is a horse for you! We must know another way to Gettysburg and that quickly!”

Then Elizabeth awoke. This was not the time for dreaming, for trying to reconstruct the mental processes of John Baring!

“I cannot think,” she said to herself. “There is something in the back of my mind, but I cannot get at it!”

“I’ll give you one more minute, missy, to decide what you’re goin’ to do.”

Black Smith drew from his pocket a giant silver watch and looked at it.

Elizabeth looked down at the ground, then steadily up at Black Smith. There was in her blue eyes a hard expression. Thus had she looked when she had refused to sell her vegetables to the

rude woman in Chambersburg. Thus had she looked also when she had first heard of John Baring's crime. From some ancestor she had inherited a stubborn will. Her affection, her common sense, her pride, directed that she free Herbert promptly and that they go away as soon and as quietly as they could. But to neither affection nor common sense nor pride would she yield. She would have made a thorough-going early Christian martyr.

"How do I know that after I have given you the paper you will let him go?" she asked. "I might get the paper and you might not be satisfied with it and refuse to bring him."

Black Smith looked at her warily. He rather admired this finesse and he had no fear that she would go away.

"The mountain people keep their word," said he. "You set on that rock an' I'll bring him an' others." Suddenly he grinned. "If you ain't here, of course you know what happens to your baby boy. An' don't you come after me!"

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"I shan't come after you," promised Elizabeth.

Once Black Smith stopped and looked back at her. Then he went on. Elizabeth could not see that he followed any road.

When he was out of sight she hid her face for a moment in her hands; then she looked up.

"It will be a little while until they come back," said she to herself. "Then they will try to catch me. They will think I have gone down to the house and they will hunt and by that time —"

She rose and looked down the side of the mountain.

"I had old Joe to lead the other day," said she. "And I had some respect for my bones and my clothes and I went round obstacles instead of going over them. Now —"

She looked back over her shoulder. The woods had closed absolutely behind Black Smith. She believed that the settlement of the mountain people must be some distance away, else sounds would have penetrated to her ears. It was a desperate chance, but she took it. She

Black Smith's Bargain 133

started recklessly, not back to the comparatively open ground, but in a direct line downward. She fell and she picked herself up; she caught her dress in briars and pulled it loose without any mercy on the cloth or without any care for the appearance which she would soon present. She stopped but once, and then merely to listen. There was no sound in the woods of any pursuit, there was scarcely a song of a bird. Again she plunged on. She did not think of John Baring, she scarcely thought of Herbert. She was a desperate creature, who forgets all but the goal, even the reason for the race.

After a while she stopped again, panting. Her hair had come unfastened and she braided it as she waited. Then she listened intently, not now in terror for sign of pursuit, but in hope of another sound. She had descended a long distance and she had kept well to the left. She should hear before long an automobile horn blown warningly on the long descent, or the chug, chug of a machine climbing the hill.

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But as yet there was nothing. She drew a deep breath and went on. Again she stopped and listened. She heard no sound, but she saw before her an open field. She had gone down through the spur of woods which ran out from the main forest and in a moment she was in the weedy fields of John Baring's property, the old house far above her, and in a few moments more she stood panting by the roadside.

There she waited. She did not walk on toward Gettysburg, because here on this comparatively level strip at the foot of a short curve the drivers would have slackened their speed and it would be easy for a car to stop. But no car came. She held her breath as she listened.

When, at last, she heard a distant horn, she stepped out toward the road. She heard also laughing voices above the sound of the horn. As the car came round the curve she lifted her hand.

"Will you take me to Gettysburg?" she cried. "I have —" But the riders did not stop to hear what she had. They were young; it may have

been that her appearance frightened them. They did not even answer, but sailed on. One young man stood up in the car and looked back at her. Elizabeth shrank against the fence.

Then she heard a different sound, this time the throb of an engine rapidly climbing the hill. Here there would be no use to ask. But when the car came into view, long and low and powerful and occupied by a man alone, she walked out into the road.

The driver stopped with a grinding of brakes, his machine turned a little to one side. It was to be gathered from his expression that he believed himself to be halted by a madwoman.

Elizabeth laid her hand across her heart. Consciousness seemed to be going once more. If he would not listen she would despair.

"I am not crazy," she explained earnestly. "I am in great trouble. I tried to get some people to take me to Gettysburg to get the officers, but they would not stop. Perhaps if you would wait here and help me I could get a ride."

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"What is your trouble?" asked the man.

Elizabeth could not answer. Her blue eyes rested upon him in anguish. The stranger called to her to stand out of the way and began to turn his car. She watched him incredulously as he opened the door.

"Get in. Where do you want to go in Gettysburg?"

"I want to see Colonel Thomas," she explained. Already the car seemed to be leaping down the hill. "I live up here and the mountaineers have threatened to do us harm. They hold a fancied wrong against us and they have carried off my brother."

The stranger stared. The story was, indeed, fantastic beyond belief.

"What mountaineers?"

"They're people that have always lived up here far back in the woods. They're outlaws. I had been warned by them, but I could n't believe they'd do what they threatened."

"Whom will Colonel Thomas get to help you?"

"There are State police in this neighborhood," said Elizabeth.

"Good," said the stranger.

They had reached the level plain, and the machine seemed to leap into a speed greater than that at which they had come down the hill. Elizabeth told, gasping, a few of the details of her trouble. The stranger glanced at her in amazement, no longer doubting her sanity. He leaned over his wheel, watching the road with a trained eye.

"I'll take the constabulary up," he offered.

Chapter IX

HERBERT PUTS TWO AND TWO TOGETHER

HERBERT had been in reality left almost without food for a day. But as he grew weaker, he grew more determined. Several times Sheldon brought him the soiled paper and the stub of pencil and asked him to write. Herbert shook his head.

"She ain't got help for you very fast," growled Sheldon.

Herbert looked up into the sullen face, seeing there again a kind of desperation.

On the morning of the second day, when Elizabeth was traveling toward the cabin, the gaunt, angular woman called Jinny came to speak to him. She brought with her a piece of bread.

"I'll sneak you some more," she promised. "Are you learned?"

"Not very," answered Herbert, as he munched the dry, poor bread.

"I mean can you read and write?"

"Oh, yes."

"An' do sums?"

"Yes, I can do sums."

"You can't get along in the world without some learnin', kin you?"

"Not very well," answered Herbert.

The woman pointed to the south.

"There's lots of us, down that-a-way what ain't got no use for learnin' an' we're dyin' like flies with our airless lives. We've got the tisc an' the takin'-off an' we won't listen to no one. I'm willin' to learn an' to have my children learn, an' sometimes one comes to show us the way, but they get druv off by those that are against 'em. I tell you the mountain people don' know what's for their good; they're blind an' they won't see, as the Good Book says. They —"

Jinny was not allowed to finish her speech. Her husband approached with Black Smith, and Herbert heard the account of Black Smith's conversation with Elizabeth.

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"She says if we let her have the boy, she'll git us the paper."

"Where is she?"

"She's settin' on a rock. There ain't but one way out for her an' that's the way she come in an' John's watchin' that. Let her set."

"Do you hev faith in her that she will keep her word?" asked Sheldon.

"Yes, I do. She's had two nights an' a day now an' she's droppin' from sleep."

But Sheldon looked about uneasily.

"You're sure it ain't no trap?"

"Of course it ain't no trap."

"Where is the paper?"

"I don't know. She'll git it when she sees him."

Sheldon stood leaning against a tree. Another man joined them and then another. They were a formidable group with their long guns, and with their savage-looking dogs standing alertly beside them.

"You bring her to Mammy's bedside an' then

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we'll test 'em both," commanded Sheldon. "Go git her."

But the party was not to move. A pleasant odor of freshly frying ham and of baking johnny-cake filled the air.

"I ain't had no food yet to-day," whined Black Smith. "I can't go too long without food."

"Well, then, eat," grumbled Sheldon, who, while he scolded, commanded Jinny to bring him his own breakfast.

Jinny brought him not only his breakfast, but advice as well.

"You have no right to persecute these young people," said she. "Vengeance is prepared for you; it were well to meet it with deeds of goodness. Let 'em go."

Her husband silenced her with his usual command.

"I ain't goin' to shet up," persisted Jinny. "An' you can't make me shet up. I've stood by ye, but I won't stand by ye no longer. We were

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benighted, but we have seen the light. Light is bein' let into all sorts o' dark places these days."

"Shet up, Jinny," commanded Sheldon once more. "Ain't a man to eat his vittles in peace?"

"No," said Jinny, "he ain't! Keep on an' them police in black clothes'll git ye soon enough, an' then ye can eat in the peace o' prison."

Sheldon rose brushing the plate of food from his knee.

"Ye take my appetite," said he. "Come on, Smith."

But Smith would not obey until he had had his fill.

"Come on," he ordered Herbert at last.

Herbert rose, stiff and trembling. Then he sat down heavily.

"Come on," commanded Sheldon roughly. "We spent enough time foolin' with you!"

"How can they walk who have n't et?" demanded Jinny. "When he has had some o' the food that tantalizes his senses, then he can walk."

"Git him some."

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Herbert ate slowly. He did not mean to delay the start; it seemed a year since he had seen Elizabeth; but he was afraid to eat rapidly.

"He has a delicate stomick," said Black Smith, grinning.

Herbert rose once more.

"I can go now," said he angrily. "But I can't go very fast."

"Well, go as fast as ye can," said Sheldon. Then he directed Herbert to step out from behind Smith and take another way. "You fetch her," said he to Smith. "We'll be there ahead of you."

Smith started rapidly, looking forward not without pleasant anticipation to the moment when, gun in hand, he should lead Elizabeth to Mammy Sheldon's cabin. It would be not only another triumph for the mountain people to have outwitted the people of the plain, but it would end an anxiety which was really acute. Mammy Sheldon knew their past history, and there were incidents which Smith and his friends believed

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might get them into serious trouble. Heaven only knew how much she had told! They would end her chances for making mischief by moving her nearer to their own cabins, annoying as was her constant crying.

Then Smith stopped speculating and stood still. The rock on which he had left Elizabeth was bare; she was not there either awake or sleeping. Under his black beard he grew deathly white. Then, cursing, he stepped rapidly into the woods. After a while he returned to the rock. Elizabeth was still not there. He stepped out again in a different direction, and this time he was longer away. When he returned a second time, he stared with a terror which had ceased to be intelligent. His journey and his meal had made his absence long. She could not have gone to fetch those black-coated police! Some one would kill him if she had; he knew that, but in his confusion he was not sure whether it would be Sheldon or the police. The girl had said that they could be punished for past crimes. Again,

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now without any conscious plan, he plunged into the woods.

When Elizabeth reached the house of Colonel Thomas, not much more than a quarter of an hour after she had accosted the stranger on the roadside, she saw that old gentleman sitting, as usual, on his porch. As usual, he did not wait for his visitors to come to him, but rose and walked to the porch steps. The kindly stranger bade Elizabeth sit still in the car and went to meet him.

"I was stopped on the Cashtown road by a young woman named Elizabeth Scott, who says that her brother has been carried off into the mountain. She has come to find you and the constabulary. My car is at your service, if you need it."

Colonel Thomas said "Wait!" and vanished indoors. His voice could be heard, first shouting to his family, then into a telephone. When he reappeared a hat was set rakishly on his head,

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and he was answering over his shoulder protests of some one indoors.

"Of course I'm going!" said he.

In another instant his foot was on the car step.

"Two State police, Garnett and Byers, rode toward Fairfield not fifteen minutes ago. We can catch them and there is a cross-road. Why, Miss Scott, don't cry *now!*"

Elizabeth looked at him tearfully. The great car was turning; she felt like a child who had been lost and who sees at last some hope of rescue.

Within five minutes they had caught up with the two horsemen who left their mounts at a farmhouse and got into the machine. The driver bent a little over his wheel and again they were off. Before they started to climb the last hill, Colonel Thomas leaning forward shouted to the driver to stop.

"We'd better make our plans," said he nervously. His eyes sparkled; one could imagine how he had looked before going into a charge.

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He had had, alas, a letter from the editor of General Adams's "Recollections," who had explained that the letter from which Colonel Thomas's quotation was taken had been partially destroyed and that the row of asterisks indicated a missing sheet. He wished that he had not mentioned his inquiry to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth recounted hurriedly the history of the last few days.

"After you went away, I went down the road on an errand, and when I came back Herbert was gone, and there was a notice saying that I could have him in exchange for the paper."

"What paper?" asked Colonel Thomas.

"Some time ago I walked up into the woods and heard an old woman crying because her son was going to take her money to buy a gun and there would n't be anything to bury her. Forty dollars was all she had. So I wrote a will, but I left it in the cabin, and she won't give it to them. I think they're afraid that she told other things."

"What other things?" asked one of the police.

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"I don't know, but they're afraid of something."

"I bet they are!" said Colonel Thomas.

"This afternoon I was to bring the paper to the old woman's cabin and they were to bring Herbert. I expect they are there now. Instead I came to get you."

The driver of the car touched a button and the car moved. Elizabeth indicated the turn into the wood road above the house. One of the police leaned forward.

"Had n't you better get out, miss?"

"Oh, no!" answered Elizabeth.

"And you, sir?" said he to Colonel Thomas.

"Of course not!" said Colonel Thomas.

Each of the constabulary took something from his hip pocket. Elizabeth looked back at them smiling in a pale sort of way, and they smiled at her.

"Never you mind, miss; they won't give much trouble."

Herbert, sitting at the foot of a tree with his

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captors beside him, heard the car first. The mountaineers stood about, guns in hand, first one, then another going off toward the spot where Black Smith was supposed to have left Elizabeth. More than an hour had passed since he had left them and there had been no sign of his return. The crying of Mammy Sheldon was almost continuous; she seemed to believe that now they had come to fetch her will. There were moments when she screamed for fear that they would bury her as she was. It was no wonder that they did not hear the car.

Black Smith had heard it, as he hunted frantically, and he came now running toward them, shouting. But his shouts were too late. The men stood mystified, and found themselves covered by the pistols of their dreaded enemies.

One of the constabulary stepped down.

"You are covered from the car!" said he quietly. "Put down your guns."

Elizabeth tried in vain to move. For an instant she did not see Herbert. If they had hurt

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him, if they had carried out their threats, then she hoped that the mountain-side would become a place of execution.

But Herbert came forward, unrestrained by his captors. The mountaineers seemed stupefied. The uniforms, the heavy revolvers, the car—all declared a newer and swifter age of retribution. Jinny was right when she said that light was about to be let in. They obeyed meekly the command of the young officer.

Herbert walked directly to the side of the car and laid his hand on Elizabeth's arm. His mind was filled with one emotion; he scarcely saw the constabulary or Colonel Thomas; he thought only that Elizabeth wanted something, and that he had it to give. He had had much time to meditate, and he had put two and two together. He had less persistence than Elizabeth, but he had more originality of mind. Weak and excited, he blurted out the words which were uppermost in his consciousness, and which had been growing to seem more and more significant.

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"They said my Grandfather Baring was buried here. They threatened to put me in the same grave. They were angry with him. I believe they shot him here."

"What! What!" Colonel Thomas stepped down from the car. "He went away with the Confederates and was never heard of more!"

"They threatened to put me in the same grave with him!" insisted Herbert. "I believe they shot him here. If he was friendly to the South they would not have done that."

"We did n't hurt you," cried a terrified voice. "We treated you good!"

"It was war-time!" cried another. "Things is done different in war-time!"

"Who shot him?" demanded the old gentleman in a voice of authority.

"It was before our time," came the frightened answer.

Then a shrill, spent voice spoke from within the log cabin.

"If you don't let me have my forty dol-

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lars for to bury me, I'll tell about John Baring!"

The old colonel went with the step of youth to the tumbledown building. Vague gleams of light illuminated the confusion in his mind. What the boy said was true — if John Baring had come to his end here, and at these hands, he was no friend to the enemy! He beckoned to the police to step nearer to the door. But the old voice carried to them all.

"I'll tell about John Baring, if you don't let me have my forty dollars."

"What about John Baring?" asked the old gentleman. "I'll see that you get your forty dollars."

The old woman was silent. Elizabeth Scott held her breath. Then the old woman spoke. Intelligence was almost gone, or she would not have uttered the betraying words. There was among them all a conviction that for the crime of their fathers against John Baring, they might still be held responsible.

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"He led 'em in here to deceive 'em!" she cried. "He pretended to help 'em and he deceived 'em. He led 'em to the wilderness to show 'em the way to Gettysburg. And our folks led 'em safely out. Great generals was among 'em an' fine men. But it was too late, an' the battle was lost. So our folks shot him an' buried him deep."

The old gentleman leaned against the door frame.

"Is it true?" he asked of Sheldon and Black Smith.

"It was before my time," answered Sheldon.

"But is it true?"

The men saw prison yawning.

"Yes," said Sheldon; "he lies buried yonder."

Elizabeth sat on her doorstep at twilight. Her body was weary, but her mind was alert. She had shown Colonel Thomas the old map and he had looked at it with tears.

"Slashed it out so they could n't get it, evidently with the first knife at hand!"

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Then Colonel Thomas had gone, his hand itching for his pen. Relieved of fear of punishment, Sheldon and his mates had told all they knew. Their bravado had vanished; they looked browbeaten and ashamed and even apologized for using the flag for a target. The constabulary had given back their guns and had smiled at Elizabeth's gratitude.

"It's a new age, miss, and they know it."

Already Elizabeth had had two callers. The first was the farmer from down the road, who twisted his hat awkwardly.

"Colonel Thomas, he stopped at my place," he explained. "You might think he'd found a million dollars. I want to know when your trees are coming."

Elizabeth rose, frightening the farmer, who thought she was going to be resentful.

"I'm going to call my brother," said she. "He's the boss of the orchard."

While the men talked, Elizabeth sat on the doorstep, her hands clasped round her knees.

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She smiled into the twilight, remembering with amusement a narrow escape. It had been on the tip of her tongue to say, when she had heard Herbert's adventures, "Darling, were n't you afraid?" and she had caught herself in time, realizing that neither "afraid" nor "darling" were words to say any more to Herbert.

When the farmer had gone, Elizabeth thought of a blossoming orchard.

Then a gaunt figure crossed the yard. Elizabeth had not seen Jinny, but she believed that this was Jinny before her.

"We've heard tell that you spoke for us," said a harsh, tired voice. "You said to every one assembled at the place of meetin' this afternoon that not bein' trusted makes folks wicked. You said you was goin' to trust us. Now you have let your light shine, miss, don't forsake us. There's not many left of us, what with our airless houses an' the tistic, but what there is is not so bad as you might expect. What I ask, miss, is that you will stand by us."

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"I will," promised Elizabeth.

"And we by you," said Jinny; and was gone.

Elizabeth's thoughts, following her, went back to John Baring, traveling the same dark road.

"He led 'em here to deceive 'em!" Mammy Sheldon's shrill old voice had cried.

She saw him again standing in his doorway. She saw the moonlight and the torchlight and the horsemen, and heard the rumbling guns.

"It was putting his brave head into a noose," said Elizabeth. Then she remembered the cry of the old woman on the side road. "Why, you're his image!"

"I'm glad of that!" said Elizabeth to herself.

THE END

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JOHN BARING'S HOUSE

By

Elsie Singmaster

Unlike most books for girls, Elsie Singmaster's stories are real literature. "John Baring's House" is more than a mere bit of pleasant fiction; it is a vivid narrative of Gettysburg days. Elizabeth Scott and her younger brother, Herbert, come from the West to take possession of their grandfather's unoccupied house. They are orphans, and apparently without relatives, when they move East. For some time they live a secluded life, making no friends among their neighbors. They do not understand their unpopularity until Elizabeth learns that John Baring is believed to have guided the Confederate troops into Gettysburg, for he disappeared at the time of the invasion and never was heard of again. Elizabeth does not believe this gossip about her grandfather, and sets out to disprove it. How she does so, incidentally rescuing her brother from the hands of kidnappers, makes the most vividly written and absorbing of all Miss Singmaster's stories for younger readers.

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JOHN BARING'S HOUSE



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